The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research

1999 Annual Conference Proceedings

DYING, DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE: PSYCHICAL AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS

The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research
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PROCEEDINGS

The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research 24th Annual Conference

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Boyce Batey
Executive Secretary

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INTRODUCTION

Boyce Batey

The theme of this conference, "Dying, Death and the Afterlife: Psychical and Spiritual Dimensions", deals with some of the most important and profound areas of life. An ancient Jain teaching is that you get at the truth by looking at a subject from many different viewpoints - like the facets of a jewels. And it is in this way that our speakers have approached the theme of this conference - from different perspectives and in different ways.

Boyce Batey covers 15 categories of survival evidence and considers that one category of evidence - like a stick - might be critiqued and broken with viable alternative explanations, but that when you bundle all categories of evidence together, it provides a strong case for survival and resists alternative reductionistic explanations grounded in philosophical materialism.

Claire Walker, Ph.D., a Theosophist who believes in reincarnation, bases faith in an afterlife on evidentiary material and personal experience and maintains that "life after death begins in this life". She maintains that speculating about the afterlife does no harm and may be of value in coping for some people.

Barbara Rommer, M.D., sees near-death experiences as helpful in preparing one for continued living, dying, death and the afterlife and considers that such experiences may promote spiritual, psychical and often physical healing.

Rabia Clark, Ph.D., notes that the many little "deaths" we go through can result in the transformation of the individual self to the spiritually evolved, awakened and realized true Self.

Donald Morse, D.D.S., Ph.D., views the management of stress while living is an excellent way to prepare for the afterlife.

Louis Richard Batzler, Ph.D., shows the value and validity of psychical research and related paranormal experiences for religion - specifically the Christian religion as expressed through aspects of parish ministry in which psi has been and can be used to foster faith, understanding and comfort for parishioners confronting dying, death, grief and the afterlife.

Mary Carman Rose, Ph.D., outlines her own traditional Christian commitment and its beliefs and describes her personal attitude toward coping with bereavement and views specific types of religious commitment and encounters with bereavement as among the most significant life experiences.

Michael Tymn muses over the reactions of others who are puzzled by the interest one has in death and the survival of consciousness.

Ravindra Kumar, Ph.D., a Hindu professor of mathematics who has experienced kundalinic awakening, describes what happens at death as the soul moves to the astral plane which "vibrates with the same frequency as the thoughts and desires of the individual at the time of death," and then to the mental plane (the heaven of orthodox religions) and finally, beyond the mental plane, which stops further rebirths on earth, although some reincarnate to learn further lessons.

Peter Novak outlines the "binary soul doctrine" or "division theory", an ancient afterlife belief that people have two souls (described as modern science now describes the conscious and the unconscious) which divide apart at death, each going to a different afterlife where one reincarnates and the other becomes trapped in a dreamlike netherworld akin to heaven or hell.

Joanne McMahon, Ph.D., provides an introduction to the importance of physiology in the study of survival of bodily death (the role of the body during and after death).

Harry Serio, D.Min., discusses the development and evolution of Biblical concepts of the afterlife with particular reference to the postmortem existence of consciousness.

In a panel discussion, Ana Jo O'Brien describes various psychical experiences she has had in which she has received veridical information about future deaths of family members and has seen and experienced the apparitions of deceased loved ones. Ruth Mattson Taylor, M.S., describes the evidence she has collected over a 30 year period in sittings with the English medium, Margaret Flavell, for survival of consciousness after bodily death.

In viewing these different perspectives on dying, death and the afterlife, we are enriched and our consciousness is expanded.

BEYOND THE VEIL: EVIDENCE FOR LIFE AFTER DEATH

Boyce Batey

This paper (a slide-illustrated presentation) covers 15 categories of evidence for survival of some aspect of consciousness after the death of the physical body: physical and mental mediumship, spontaneous communications, possession, apparitions of the dead including psychomanteum use, spirit photography, electronic voice recordings, instrumental transcommunication, experiments at the time of death, death bed experiences, place hauntings, near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences, mystical experiences, and reincarnation.

INTRODUCTION

In his diary of a writer, the Russian novelist, Fyodor Doestoesky says: "There is only a single supreme idea on earth - the concept of immortality of the human soul. All other profound ideas by which men live are only an extension of it." In the midst of his trials and tribulations, the Biblical Job asks plaintively, "If a man die, shall he live again?" In his soliloquy that begins, "To be or not to be, that is the question", Shakespeare's Hamlet refers to death as "that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns".

And yet in the past 25 years, thousands of people and by one account, statistically, some 14 million people in the United States alone, have passed through that portal which we call death and have come back from that undiscovered country to tell what it is like to die. These people are clinically dead with no heart beat, no vital signs and yet, through cardio-pulmonary resuscitation techniques, are revived and tell what it is like to die. They describe passing through a dark tunnel and seeing a bright light. Some talk with persons who previously died and receive information which they would have received in no other manner. Some enter this light and encounter an unconditionally loving Being of Light in whose presence they are given a past life review in which they review their life, seeing, feeling and understanding empathetically how their words, behavior and actions affected others. This is called a near-death experience. When they come back, they are no longer afraid to die because they know what it means to die. Having encountered the unconditionally loving Being of Light, they have integrated and assimilated this unconditional love so that they themselves become unconditionally loving.

Those psychiatrists, medical doctors and scientists who are grounded in philosophical materialism give reductionistic explanations for these near-death experiences, saying they are a result of brain anoxia or hypoxia (deprivation of oxygen to the brain), a result of beta endorphins (morphine like analgesics) released in the brain, or psychological disassociation caused by the fear of death. However, such explanations do not explain adequately what is happening during the near-death experience.

Many persons, during the out-of-body phase of the near-death experience, see and experience things that are corroborated empirically when they are resuscitated. There is no way to explain this by saying it is a result of dying or pathological brain processes. And psychiatrists are unable to explain, using explanations grounded in philosophical materialism, the changes in the belief systems, personalities, and lives of those who have had near-death experiences. Hallucinations, they know, do not bring such changes.

The near-death experience is one of some 15 categories of evidence for survival of consciousness beyond the death of the physical body. I'm using the word "evidence" - not the word "proof." In this whole area, one walks a narrow path between having an open mind and a hole in the head. You've got to use considerable discernment in what you see and experience. If you have one stick, it is easy to break that stick. When you have a number of sticks, a bundle of sticks together, it is most difficult to break that bundle. For each of the categories of evidence for survival of consciousness after bodily death, there are alternative explanations which may or may not be so. Gauge the veridity of each of those alternative explanations; do they fit? Combine all of the different categories of evidence to see what picture they make and what evidence as a whole they provide for survival of consciousness after bodily death.

In Hydesville, New York in 1848, members of the Fox family heard raps coming from the walls of their house. One night, Kate Fox who was then 12 years old, said, "Do as I do" and clapped several times. From the wall came raps replicating the number of times she had clapped. Over a period of time, the family evolved a method of communicating with whomever or whatever was making the raps. They were told that it was the spirit of a traveling salesman who had been invited to stay in the house over night. While he was sleeping, his throat was cut, $500.00 he was carrying was stolen and his body was buried in the basement of the house. When the Fox family dug in the basement, they found the skeleton of a man. This was the beginning of the religion of Spiritualism which spread throughout the United States and abroad. People sat in seances to communicate with the spirits of loved ones who had died.

Abraham Lincoln invited mediums into the White House to give seances during which information was given to Union generals which they used in defeating Confederate forces during the Civil War. In England, in the early 1880's, a Census of Hallucinations was conducted throughout the British Isles. It developed information on whether people had ever communicated with those who had died. Over 5,000 reports were received, giving details of such contacts. At this time in England, the Industrial Revolution was under way and as one result, people were dropping out of Christian churches. Ministers, professors and dons at Cambridge and Oxford Universities, acknowledging that the Resurrection of Jesus was the cornerstone of Christianity (the New Testament records 11 post mortem appearances of the resurrected body of Jesus), felt that if empirical evidence could be developed that man survives death, people would return to the churches. So in 1885, they founded the British Society for Psychical Research to develop evidence of survival after physical death. Frederick Myers, a classical scholar, did a pattern and content analysis of the data from the Census of Hallucinations and wrote his magnum opus, ***The Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death***, the first scientific book covering various categories of evidence for life after death. In this book and through additional research, there are some 15 different categories of evidence

for survival. The early researchers began conducting research on mediumship, one of the categories. There are two major forms of mediumship - physical and mental.

PHYSICAL MEDIUMSHIP

In physical mediumship, a person such as Daniel Douglas Home, who was never caught in fraud, had apparitions appear in his presence. Florence Cook, another early English medium, was investigated by the prominent scientist, William Crookes. In her presence, with all precautions taken to prevent fraud, beings in spirit, such as Bien Boa, appeared and were photographed in darkened rooms with infrared light. In other seances, psychical researchers investigating physical mediums tied the arms and legs of mediums to chairs with ropes. Then ectoplasm or teleplasm, an emanation from the medium's body, would form ectoplasmic rods to lift people and other heavy weights, support "trumpets" or megaphones in the air, surround the body of one in spirit so that it materializes, etc. A seance photo of Jack Webber, a physical medium in the 1920s and 1930s, show him suspending two trumpets in midair with ectoplasmic rods extruding from his mouth and solar plexus.

In direct voice mediumship, the extruded ectoplasm purportedly forms around the voice box and larynx of one in spirit and attaches itself to the narrow end of the trumpet so the voice of the one in spirit is amplified when they speak through the megaphone. As a result, the voice sounds just like that of the deceased. In other forms of mental mediumship, where a being in spirit takes possession of or communicates telepathically through the medium, the voice box and larynx of the medium are used so the voice sounds more like that of the medium than the deceased. In other cases, physical mediums are put into cabinets or other confined places to increase psychic energy that in turn assists the emanation of ectoplasm which then builds up around the body of one in spirit, perhaps the medium's control. Some psychical researchers investigating physical mediums have grasped at this ectoplasm and found that they have a handful of cheese cloth, where fraud is being practiced. Other times they encounter genuine ectoplasm which dissipates quickly when exposed to light and when examined in a laboratory under a microscope, shows signs of protein. When grasped, it quickly snaps back into the body of the medium, sometimes causing physical injury. When Frank Kluski, a Polish medium, went into trance, beings in spirit materialized, dipped their hand or folded hands into bowls of liquid paraffin, and after the paraffin dried, dematerialized, leaving empty paraffin "gloves". In their careful investigation to eliminate fraud as an explanation, researchers put certain chemicals in the liquid paraffin and later analyzed the paraffin "gloves" and found the same chemical in the "gloves" which were not of the hands of anyone in the seance room. In the early 1920's, spirit photos were taken with magnesium powder flashes at Kluski seances in Warsaw, Poland and at the University of Paris in France.

In 1970 in Gould City, Michigan, the parents of Roger Nesbit received news that their son, who had been fighting in Vietnam, had been killed in battle. They received his belongings, including his Marine Corps ring. The father, who was deeply mourning the death of his only son, put on his son's ring. After a short while, hairs grew out of the onyx of the ring and then disappear. Mediums came into the house and communicated with the spirit of the deceased son who said that he was causing the hairs to grow out of the ring to communicate to his father that he was O.K., he was all right and not to be

concerned about him. Having this message brought healing to the bereavement the father was experiencing.

MENTAL MEDIUMSHIP

In St. Louis, Missouri early in the 20th century, Pearl Curran and her neighbor sat night after night with a ouija board, attempting to communicate with spirits of the dead. Night after night they received innocuous messages. Then, one night it was as though the ouija board had a life of its own and spelled out, "Many moons ago I lived, again I come, Patience Worth my name." The spirit claimed to be the Puritan wife of a barrister in England early in the 17th century who always wanted to write books. Over the years, Patience Worth used Mrs. Curran and the ouija board to enter into repartee, write poetry and produce five books, one of which won a national literary award. This is one of the outstanding cases of mental mediumship.

Mrs. Piper, the wife of a physician in Boston, was one of the outstanding mediums of the 20th century. She was never caught in fraud although detectives investigated her for several years. William James, a president of the American Society for Psychical Research, conducted research with her. For example, George, an architect living in New York City, came through the medium as a "drop in communicator" one of whom no one present at the seance had ever heard. He gave his name and details of his life that allowed William James to contact over 30 persons who had known George while he was living. For over a year, James attended seances to which he brought persons who had known George when he was living. Their names and identities were concealed from the medium. During the seances, George would come through the medium to give details of events known only to him and the person at the seance. The spirit of George interacted with each of the persons who had known him as he would have had he been living.

When Rosemary Brown of England was a child, a being in spirit, the Hungarian composer and pianist, Franz Liszt appeared and told her that when she became a woman, he'd come back and write music through her. After she became an adult, he did return and starting in 1964, dictated music to her which she wrote down. Then six other great composers - Chopin, Debussy, Rachmaninoff, Beethoven, Brahms and Bach came to her and dictated music which she wrote down. When musical experts listened to this music, they asked her where it had come from. They could tell it had the unique style of a given composer, but had never before heard it. The group of composers said that they had come back to write these unique pieces through this one woman to provide evidence of survival after death.

Great discernment is required, however, when working with mediums because a viable alternative explanation for many mediumistic communications is the "super ESP hypothesis". This holds that when conscious or unconscious fraud is not involved and a medium is in a deep trance state, a known or unknown part of their own psyche uses various forms of paranormal cognition - telepathy, clairvoyance, retrocognition, clairaudience, clairsentince, claircognescence, et al. - to obtain information from the conscious/unconscious mind of the one sitting at the seance. To provide evidence for survival and counter the "super ESP hypothesis", Frederic Myers, a classical scholar, came back through five different mediums in different parts of the world following his death. He gave to each one a piece of a message which made no sense by itself, but

when brought together, spelled out a very clear message. A test like this transcends the ability of anyone tested in a laboratory to provide veridical data via ESP. In science there is a law called "William of Occam's Razor" which states that whenever you have a phenomenon for which there are two explanations, one of which is very simple and explains all the facts and the other is very complicated and requires various assumptions, you always select the simpler explanation. This is known as the "Law of Parsimony" and using it on tests like the above provides evidence of postmortem survival.

SPONTANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

Another category of evidence is spontaneous communication in dreams and other altered states of consciousness. For example, two years after a farmer died, his youngest son had a dream in which his father, wearing his old black overcoat, opened the coat and pointed to an inside pocket. The dream reoccurred several times and prompted the boy to ask his mother where the overcoat was. She directed him to a closet where it was hanging. He got it out, found that the inside pocket was sewn shut, opened it and found that it contained a paper saying, "Look in my Pappy's old Bible." They did and found a will leaving the farmer's estate equally to his four sons. Previously, the only known will had left the entire estate to one son. The second will was dated after the first will and when probated, superceded the first will. No one living knew of the second will nor of the paper in the overcoat pocket directing people to the Bible where the second will was located.

POSSESSION

Possession provides another category of survival evidence. In Watseka, Illinois in 1878, Lurancy Vennums, a 14 year old girl, was apparently possessed by the spirit of Mary Roff who had died at the age of 18 when Lurancy was 15 months old. She claimed she was Mary Roff and asked to live for three months with the Roffs who were neighbors. During the 16 weeks she stayed with the Roffs, she "had total recall of virtually everything that had happened to Mary in her lifetime years before. During this time, some 30 people who knew Mary when she was living visited and Lurancy not only recognized them and called them by name but related to them just as Mary had over 12 years previously when she was alive. She remembered minor accidents, journeys, family events and habits in minute detail."(Holroyd, 1976, 111). Richard Hodgson, a psychical researcher, investigated and authenticated this case.

In Chicago, a number of patients who were possessed came to Dr. Wickland. He used electrical equipment to shock them, driving out the possessing spirits who then took possession of Mrs. Wickland, a deep trance medium. Dr. Wickland then spoke with the possessing entities, depossessed his wife, and his patients left his office, healed. Dr. Wickland documented this activity in his book, ***Twenty Years Among the Dead.***

APPARITIONS OF THE DEAD, INCLUDING PSYCHOMANTEUM USE

F.G., a traveling salesman from Boston, returned to his hotel room to write up his accounts. As he sat at a table and looked up, he saw his deceased sister, who had been dead for over nine years, sitting in a chair across the table from him. She looked perfectly normal, except for a red scratch on her right cheek. He was startled, reached

out to touch her, and she disappeared. He was so discombobulated by this experience that he returned home to see his mother who he'd not seen in nearly a year. He told her what he'd seen and when she heard of the red scratch on her deceased daughter's right cheek, she broke down in tears. He asked why she was crying. She told him that after his sister died, she was preparing her body for burial, accidentally scratched her right cheek and covered the scratch with powder so no one would know. Two weeks later, the mother died. This suggests that the sister - in spirit - was aware of the upcoming death of the mother and appeared to her brother to induce him to return to see his mother before she died (and also corroborate the validity of the scratch on the cheek).

In an English study, of 153 persons who saw spirits of deceased persons, only one told their minister and none told their doctor. Many people do see and some speak with the spirits of deceased persons, but are afraid to tell others because they may be thought crazy.

One day in 1969, Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, perhaps the world's most outstanding thanatologist, who has written books on death and dying and held many workshops throughout the world for ministers and doctors, was speaking with a minister at the University of Chicago Hospital. She was telling him how despondent she was about working with the dying and was thinking about leaving this field of work. As they spoke, a woman came up to her and said "Dr. Ross, I'd like to speak with you; I have something very important to say." Dr. Kubler-Ross broke off her conversation with the minister and the woman said, "Let's walk down to your office." As they walked down the corridor, Dr. Kubler-Ross recognized who this woman was - Mary Swartz, a patient of hers who had died and been buried 10 1/2 months previously. Kubler-Ross began doing reality testing - touching Mary - to prove to herself that she was real. When they reached the doctor's office, Mary Swartz reached out and opened the door. Kubler-Ross walked in and later recalled that "When I saw the mess on my desk, I knew I was in contact with reality." She walked to her desk and sat down; Mary closed the door and walked over in front of the desk. She said, "I have come back to thank you for having helped me to die, but more importantly, I have come back to encourage you to continue your work with the dying. It's very important." Kubler-Ross still could not believe this was happening and to prove to herself it was real, did something "very shrewd - I lied to her." She told Mary Swartz that she'd like her to write a note to Rennie Gaines - a Unitarian Universalist minister who also had helped Mary die with dignity. "But I really wanted the note for myself", she admitted later. Mary Swartz stood in front of the desk, smiling, as though she knew why the doctor really wanted the note, and agreed to write one. Dr. Kubler-Ross handed her a pen and a piece of paper. After writing the note, Mary handed it to Dr. Kubler-Ross and said, "Promise me you'll continue your work with the dying." Kubler-Ross promised she would, Mary said that she had to leave, walked to the door, opened it, walked out and closed it behind her. Immediately, Kubler-Ross got up, rushed to the door, opened it, looked in the corridor - and no one was there. She wanted to have a fingerprint expert determine if Mary's fingerprints were on the paper and thought of having a handwriting expert determine if the writing on the note was that of Mary Swartz, but after a while felt no need to do this and gave the note to the Rev. Renford Gaines, D.Min.

As a psychical researcher, I was interested in what the note said. I asked Dr. Kubler-Ross if I could obtain a copy. She told me she had given the note to Renny Gaines and didn't know where he was. Eventually, I located him. He had changed his

name to Mwalimu Imara in line with his African heritage and was the Executive Director of the Boston Center for Religion and Psychotherapy, Inc., 110 Arlington Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116. I wrote to him, asking for a copy of the letter that Mary Swartz had written. On July 11, 1976, he wrote to me, saying,

"Dear Mr. Batey, Enclosed is a verbatim copy of the note. After some consideration, Dr. Ross and I decided not to make facsimiles (Xerox, etc.) available for many reasons - permission of her relatives, hospital and professional confidentiality requirements, and so on. But, I do have it and will give verbatim copies out and show it to anyone interested. Sincerely, Mwalimu Imara".

On the letterhead stationary of the Boston Center for Religion and Psychotherapy, he typed the following :

"This is a verbatim copy of a note written by Mary Swartz, a patient in University of Chicago Hospital in 1967-68. The note is written on University of Chicago stationary and was in an envelope addressed to Rev. Renford Gaines, Unitarian Universalist Church, Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. The note was not mailed, but delivered to the addressee by Dr. Ross at a conference at Columbia University in the middle of April, 1969." The note reads:

Hello there, Dropped in to see Dr. Ross. One of two on the top of my 'list'. You being the other. I'll never find or know anyone to take the place of you two. I want you to know, as I've told her, I'm at peace at home now. I want you to know you helped me. The simple Thank You is not enough. But please know how much I mean it. Thank you again. Mary Swartz".

She came back for a purpose and that purpose was to encourage the foremost thanatologist in our time to continue her work with the dying when she was despondent about doing so.

Dr. Raymond Moody constructed a psychomanteum or apparition chamber to enable people to contact the spirits of deceased loved ones. It consists of a large mirror on the wall, a reclining chair in front of the mirror, a dim light source behind the chair, and black velvet drapes encompassing this space. After preparation, a person sits in the chair and stares for 90 minutes into the black depths of the mirror while thinking of the deceased with whom they wish to communicate. Over 50% of the people have an experience of seeing the apparition of the deceased in the mirror, speaking to the apparition, hearing the apparition speak to them, and in some instances, experience the apparition stepping out of the mirror, conversing with, and sometimes touching them. Dr. Moody has documented this research in his book, ***Reunions***.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY/ELECTRONIC VOICE RECORDINGS/INSTRUMENTAL TRANSCOMMUNICATION

In 1959, the Swedish film maker and painter, Friedrich Jurgenson, used a tape recorder to record the call of birds. When he played it back, he heard the voice of his deceased mother speaking to him. He began experimenting and recorded the voices of hundreds of deceased persons speaking a number of different languages. Konstantin Raudive, a Latvian psychologist began experimenting in recording such spirit voices and

by 1968 had recorded over 70,000 such voices and documented his research in the book, ***Breakthrough: Amazing Electronic Communication with the Dead.*** Some, but not all, such communications can be attributed to radio transmissions and the subconscious mind of the operator may psychokinetically imprint the voices on the tape.

Mark Macy, Director of Continuing Life Research in Denver, Colorado conducts research called instrumental transcommunication, in which he communicates with and receives voice recorded message and pictures from those in spirit, using television and computer screens.

On December 29, 1979, two students from Central Connecticut State College visited the Hermitage, the former residence of Andrew Jackson. While there, they took a photograph of the guest house, and have stated that no one was near the building at the time. The photograph shows the building and the apparent spirits of a man and woman wearing clothing of the early 19th century. The man and woman don't exist from the knees down. Photo experts have examined the photos and found no fraud involved. A number of such spirit photographs have been taken and although many have been faked, the ones that have not been faked provide evidence for postmortem survival.

EXPERIMENTS AT THE TIME OF DEATH

Dr. McDougal conducted experiments using a delicate beam balance scale in a Boston hospital about 1910 with nine patients as they lay dying. At the moment of death, there was a drop in weight of one quarter to three quarters of an ounce that could not be accounted for in any way - loss of body fluids, exhalation of breath, etc. - and in writing up this research, he indicated that the loss in weight represented the loss of weight of the soul.

The French photographer, Bolduc, took photographs of his wife and son at the time they were dying and caught on film cloud-like images rising from their bodies.

DEATH BED EXPERIENCES

Death bed experiences also provide evidence for survival of consciousness after bodily death. As some people lay dying, they will speak to those in the room and also see and speak to beings in spirit, usually those who they have loved. Karlis Osis, Ph.D., who conducted research with over 1,000 doctors and nurses in the United States and India from 1959 to 1973 and published the results of his research in his book, ***At the Hour of Death***, did pattern and content analysis on the data he collected Some 90% of those in spirit who appear to the dying are persons who they knew well when they were alive. 62% die within 24 hours after the being in spirit communicates that they have come to help the dying person pass over to the other side. This is known as the "Peak in Darien" experience after a poem in which Balboa can see both the familiar Atlantic Ocean and the new Pacific Ocean from a mountain peak in Central America.

PLACE HAUNTINGS

Place hauntings, also called counseling the dead or soul rescue work, provides another category of evidence for survival of consciousness after bodily death. For years, I've done this work and have investigated over 40 reports of hauntings. When people

contact Yale University or the University of Connecticut because they are experiencing a haunting, are frightened and don't know what to do, they're put in contact with me. I then work with a team of others - parapsychologists, psychologists, clairvoyants, deep trance mediums - to investigate and resolve the situation. For example, a woman in Manchester, Connecticut called me because she was experiencing a ghost in her home and was frightened for herself and her two year old son. She told her husband about it, but he ridiculed her, saying, "Why don't you cook it a cheeseburger and feed it?"

Then, one night as they were in their television room, it was as though a whirlwind picked her up, whirled her into their master bedroom and slammed the door shut behind her. This frightened him and terrified her. She phoned and asked me to come out, find out who or what was in her home and get rid of it. So I took out my team of exterminators - Dr. Brian Riley, a nuclear physicist and parapsychologist, his wife Alberta, a self-conscious clairvoyant and Terry Kullgren, a deep trance medium to investigate the case. I asked Alberta and Terry to use their psychic abilities and go about the house to see what they could detect; in advance, I told them nothing about what was reported to be happening in the house. While they did this, Brian and I interviewed the lady of the house.

After we finished this, I was going to conduct a seance so Terry could go into trance and contact the spirit of the being who she and Alberta had identified as being in the house. They both said that it was the spirit of an elderly man, that his right arm and hand hurt, and they identified a place alongside the bed in the master bedroom as being the center of activity in the house. Suddenly, a voice came through the medium, "What are you doing here?" I replied, "We're here because the lady of the house is frightened of you." "Why?" "Because you're dead." "I'm not dead, I'm standing right here." I asked him to come over to me, put his hand on my chest and push. Through the medium to whom he was communicating telepathically, he said he'd done that. I asked him what happened. He said his hand went right through me. I asked why he thought that happened. He said he didn't know. I suggested that he was dead to his physical body but still alive in his spirit body. "If that's so, why does my arm hurt? Why does my hand hurt?" I told him that in spirit, mind is the creator and the builder. "Believe that your arm and hand are whole and fine and they will be." After a while he spoke through the medium who was still in a light trance state, "You're right - they no longer hurt." Then I asked him if anyone he had loved had died. When he said they had, I asked him to call to them. He called, "Mom, Mom, Mom". After a while his voice changed to indicate that she was in contact with him. Then he said, "I don't need to be here any more...I'm going...I'm leaving." The medium, the clairvoyant and the woman of the house, who is naturally sensitive, then said, "He's gone." No longer was the woman of the house frightened.

NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

We've spoken already about near-death experiences. In 1929, after a man drowned, his girl friend and life guards came out into the ocean in a life boat to save him. He was above the boat watching as they dragged his body aboard the boat and took him back to the shore where it took two hours to revive him. Dr. Kenneth Ring conducted research with over 100 persons who had a near-death experience and found that 60 % experienced deep levels of peace; 37 % experienced leaving their body; 23 % entered the darkness; 16 % saw the Light; and 10 % entered the Light and experienced the presence

of a Being of Light. No matter the depth of their experience during the near-death experience, these persons were changed by the experience. Researchers - especially those associated with the International Association for Near-Death Studies - are studying the aftereffects of the near-death experience on those who have had the experience.

OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCES

Have you ever had an out-of-body experience? Scientifically, it's called antigravitationaltetrasynchronicity - a state of being in four dimensional time. The Apollo 14 astronaut, Edgar Mitchell, has indicated that if consciousness can function outside of the body and brain at a discrete distance from the body and brain, it's evidence that some aspect of consciousness survives the death of the physical body. Many years ago, I thought that the out-of-body experience or astral projection was a subjective psychological experience that could be explained psychologically. But now, as a result of my own research, both experimentally and experientially, I'm convinced of the objectivity and the extrasomaticity of the out-of-body experience (that some component of consciousness is able to function intelligently with awareness at discrete points outside of and away from the physical body).

Sylvan Muldoon read a book written by the psychical researcher, Hereward Carrington, who wrote that not very many people know about astral projection. Having had many out-of-body experiences since childhood, Sylvan Muldoon wrote to Hereward Carrington, saying, I'll tell you what you want to know about astral projection. Together, they wrote the book, ***The Projection of the Astral Body***, a classic in the field. It contains photographs of an Egyptian painting that shows the *Ka* or spiritual body over the physical body; a Chinese drawing that shows the astral or spiritual body above the physical body and connected to it by a cord; and various other drawings.

Chapter 12, Verses 6 and 7 of Ecclesiastes says: "...before the silver cord of life snaps, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel is broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."2 If you ask a minister what the "silver cord" in this passage means, you're likely to receive an incorrect answer.

The concept of extrasomaticity during the out-of-body experience is that when you're sleeping, in a spontaneous altered states of consciousness, or one induced through various psychospiritual technologies, the astral or spiritual body comes out of coincidence with the physical body and no matter how far distant it may travel, is always connected to the physical body by the silver cord. The silver cord extends from the medulla oblongata at the back of the head of the astral body to the middle of the forehead of the physical body. This cord can extend for thousands of miles and if severed, results in a permanent out-of-body experience which is referred to as death. It is suggested that dreams of flying or falling are ways in which the conscious mind becomes aware of having had an out-of-body experience. A jerk of the body as one goes to sleep is termed a myoclonic jerk by medical doctors. Psychical researchers call it an astral repercussion experience caused by the astral body coming back quickly into coincidence with the physical body.

Throughout history, persons have had these experiences. St. Augustine describes several instances when he was seen at a distance while his physical body was known to

be at another place (a phenomenon known as bilocation). While on safari in Kenya, the little bus in which Lyall Watson, an English biologist, was traveling, rolled over twice and balanced on the edge of a gully. Lyall Watson found himself in his astral body outside the jeep. He could see his physical body in the bus and an unconscious young man who would be injured if the bus tipped over. He then came to in his physical body, pulled the young man free of the little bus which then tipped over in the gully. During World War I, a medical officer was to be flown to the scene of a medical emergency when his plane flipped over and he was thrown clear. The doctor was some 200 feet in the air, seeing the plane and his body below, seeing ambulances from the nearby hanger drive over and stall and attendants rush over to his physical body and administer alcohol to revive him. He drifted over the countryside, viewing the activity below, and then returned to his physical body. He could describe all that occurred as seen from his elevated perspective, lost his fear of death as a result of this experience, and later described this experience at a meeting of the British Medical Association.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba of southern India, a purported avatar, has gone out of his body, interacted with members of the Indian parliament and others and then disappeared.

In Kirlian photography, high voltage, low amperage electricity is used to take photographs without light or conventional photography equipment. One effect, know as the "lost leaf" effect, results from taking a photograph of a leaf from which a portion has been removed. A photo of the result shows a coronal discharge around the removed portion. Dr. Harold Saxon Burr conducted research for 20 years at Yale University, studying this effect which he called "life fields", saying there is an electrical field interpenetrating and surrounding every living plant, animal and human and that consciousness controls this field.

At William Roll's Psychical Research Foundation in Durham, North Carolina, Blue Harary and Gerald Solfvin conducted laboratory research on the out-of-body experience. Blue Harary would go out of the body under conscious control and interact with humans, animals and electromechanical devices to provide evidence of the objectivity of the out-of-body experience. He interacted with a kitten who recognized his presence and with rattlesnakes who would strike at his astral body and then, sensing there was no danger, stop striking. He appeared at random times to mediums and clairvoyants who sensed and reported his presence. More importantly, he interacted with sophisticated monitoring devices that recorded his presence at a discreet point outside of his physical body. Thermocouples monitored changes in heat and thermisters and photomutiplier tubes monitored changes in the permeability of the electromagnetic spectrum at the point to which he went while out of the body.

Robert Monroe, a cable television executive, started having spontaneous out-of-body experiences at night while sleeping. He experiencing himself floating near the ceiling of his bedroom, looked down, saw his wife in bed and himself next to her. He became frightened, thought he was dead, and this fear brought him back into his body. This occurred night after night. He sought advise from ministers and psychologists and eventually a friend advised him that these were out-of-body experiences and were a natural phenomena. He developed a technique to go out of the body under conscious control, recorded over 600 such instances, and conducted experiential research about which he wrote in his book, ***Journeys Out of the Body***. Once he journeyed out-of-the-body several hundred miles from his home in Charlottesville, Virginia to a

friend who was in New Jersey. He pinched her, she jumped, he was startled and returned to his physical body. A week later, when she was back in Charlottesville, he mentioned this to her and she raised her blouse, showed him the brown and blue mark where he had pinched her and said, "Bob, next time, don't pinch so hard". Evidence like this that some extrasomatic aspect of his being was functioning and interacting with the physical world at a distance from his physical body convinced him that the work he was doing was valid. Research in laboratories was conducted with him and others who could go out of the body under conscious control. Monitoring wires were placed on them to monitor brain activity, heart and pulse rate, eye movements, etc. When they went out of the body, they would go to a shelf above their bed, view a random five digit number that had been placed there and the time before returning to their body. When they reported accurately the number they had seen and the time they saw it, researchers identified the psychoneurophysiological patterns consistent with being out of the body. Monroe then founded the Monroe Institute in Virginia that assisted others in having out-of-body experiences by playing "pink noise" with a binaural beat that synchronized the activity in both brain hemispheres which research indicated was a prelude to having this experience.

Ingo Swann, an artist living in New York City, has been tested by the American Society for Psychical Research for his veridical out-of-body experiences. While out of the body, he has gone to "targets" in other rooms and then accurately draws what he has seen. While in a Faraday cage that prevented passage of any known electromagnetic waves, Dr. Alex Tanous and others went to a black box controled by the random decay of a radioactive substance which caused one of six different figures to display on one of four quadrants of a disc. A series of mirrors inside the box and a computer generated strip chart in mathematical code indicating which figure was displayed on which quadrant overcame a possible knowledge of what was displayed by the use of paranormal cognition. The only way that subjects could identify which figure was on which quadrant was by going out of the body and looking through a small peep hole on the front of the black box. This was done accurately by various persons including Ingo Swann and Dr. Alex Tanous and gave some understanding of the nature of perception involved in the out-of-body state.

The American Society for Psychical Research also conducted a series of experiments with drop in communicators from out of town who would come while out of the body to the ASPR library in New York City, stand on a white paper cross on the floor, look at objects displayed on a table and describe by phone what they saw when they returned home from their trip to New York.

Dr. Kenneth Ring has conducted research with persons who are congenitally blind and blinded following birth and found that during out-of-body experiences and the out-of-body stage of near-death experiences that they are able to see and later describe what they have seen.

The Apollo 14 astronaut, Edgar Mitchell, has said that if man can see events while out of the body, he can see without the body and without the brain. In other words, the out-of-body experience provides evidence that some aspect of consciousness survives the death of the physical body.

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES

Overwhelming mystical experiences where people experience a great white light and know that there is no death - only life - are sufficient to persuade them of postmortem survival. Persons having such experiences are transformed by them and this provides evidence - not proof - of survival.

REINCARNATION

If reincarnation is valid, it follows that some aspect of consciousness survives the death of the physical body.

Dr. Ian Stevenson, Carlson Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Division of Personality Studies at the Health Sciences Center, University of Virginia is the world's foremost researcher of reincarnation evidence. In 1997, he published his magnum opus, ***A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects*** and an abstract of it, ***Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect***. He is respected for the careful and accurate research which he has done throughout the world for the past 35 years. He conducts research primarily on children who, when they begin speaking at three and four years old, begin telling their parents and caregivers of previous lifetimes they remember. As he investigates these cases, Dr. Stevenson seeks to find a viable alternative explanation other than reincarnation. Is it genetic memory? Some form of paranormal cognition? Conscious or unconscious fraud by the child or the child's parents? Information heard in the present life and confabulation? If such explanations don't work, he'll accept a case as "suggestive of reincarnation". Over the years, he's collected over 2,600 reported cases of past life memories and writes of 225 cases in these books. These are cases in which the child remembers some details of the previous life, including how they died. What is outstanding about these cases is that the children have rare types of birthmarks and/or birth anomalies that correspond in location and configuration with the mortal wounds on the body of the one they remember having been in a previous life. When there are two such birthmarks or anomalies, the odds against it happening by chance alone are 25,600 to 1. If there are three or more such birthmarks or anomalies, the odds increase exponentially. In addition, xenoglossy is involved in some of these cases; the children speak a language spoken by the one they recall having been in a past life although they have not been exposed to that language in this life. The books contain photographs of the birthmarks and anomalies of which Dr. Stevenson writes. A boy in India has lack of pigmentation on his chest where an autopsy report shows shotgun blasts to the one he recalls having been in a previous life. A boy in Turkey recalled a previous life as his own uncle who died when stabbed in the head. The boy had a large, irregular growth on his head where the uncle was stabbed and additionally, a malformed toe where the uncle had a chronic infection. A boy in India recalled being shot in the back of the head where he had a small round birthmark; on the top of his head was a much larger irregular birthmark that corresponded to the exit wound of the bullet shown on the autopsy report of the deceased man the boy remembered having been in his previous life. A boy in Turkey who recalled having been shot in the right side of his head with a shotgun in a previous life had a deformed right ear and face. A girl in Burma who recalled having been run over by a railroad train that severed her right leg below the knee was born without a leg below the right knee. These type of cases are the best physical and empirical evidence we have for the validity of reincarnation. By the time these

children are nine to eleven years old, they've lost their memories of the previous life.

After the death of a Dalai Lama, Tibetan lamas select his successor by locating a young boy who demonstrates that he is the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama by identifying articles that belonged to the deceased Dalai Lama. It was in this manner that the present Dalai Lama was selected.

When you go where few have gone, you see what few have seen and learn what few have learned. Last October while I was in Tibet I climbed a mountain one evening to a Tibetan Buddhist Monastery where priests were releasing the spirits from the bodies of deceased persons. They chanted, twirled prayer wheels and rang tingshas (Tibetan prayer chimes) before tapping the top of the heads of the deceased to permit their spirits to emerge through the crown chakra.

The following morning, as I climbed the mountain again, past the monastery, toward the top of the mountain, Tibetan Buddhist priests passed me, carrying on their backs the bodies of the deceased wrapped in cloth. They had broken the hip joints of the deceased so they could fold the legs up over the body and have a smaller load to carry. At the top of the mountain, they placed the bodies on a round stone platform near which families of the deceased stood quietly. A slight breeze moved prayer flags hung in this area as the sweet smelling smoke of burning evergreen tree branches wafted through the air. Six Tibetan Buddhist priests sat nearby, chanting, twirling prayer wheels and ringing tingshas. .

Then butchers with knives two and a half feet long came out from a small shed and cut the flesh from the arms and legs of the deceased. They disemboweled and scalped them. When they had finished and withdrew, some 50 small, gray vultures who had been waiting nearby flocked in. If a vulture could not swallow a piece of flesh that was too long, a butcher tapped the vulture on the head with his knife, took the piece of flesh to a log cutting board and cut it into smaller pieces which he threw back onto the platform. Within 15 minutes, the vultures consumed the flesh, flew off the platform and waited nearby while the butchers came in and with hooks, dragged the skeletons to the stone ledge of the platform. They scattered barley flour on the platform so as they used large stone mallets to crush the skeletons and skulls into small pieces, the pieces wouldn't fly off on to the ground. As they finished, they threw the pieces of bone onto the stone platform and the vultures came in again to consume the last remnants of the bodies. As I watched all of this, it made a profound and lasting impact on my psyche. I was not disgusted because the context in which this occurred was sacred and this was a way of returning the body to Nature.

CONCLUSION

When you consider all these categories of evidence for postmortem survival, consider viable alternative explanations for each of them, and see how they intermesh, they provide a very strong case for survival of consciousness after bodily death. If you believe that the grave is the end of life and there is no afterlife, the result is that you live your life in one way. If you have a belief - based on faith or evidence - that consciousness survives the death of the physical body and life continues after bodily death, then you live in another way. This ultimately is the importance of survival evidence.

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DYING, DEATH & THE AFTERLIFE
Psychical & Spiritual Dimensions

A REINCARNATIONIST'S EXPECTATION OF THE AFTERLIFE

ABSTRACT. The premise of this paper is that there is an afterlife by a consensus of faith, and also by a rather large accumulation of evidentiary claims, anecdotes, and personal experiences. The main body of the paper will be given to the argument advanced here that life after death begins in this life, that a sensitive person can recognize its psychic indications and quite deliberately and consciously try to plan around these indications. Though this planning may include wished for features in an afterlife, the variations in claims of such features that can be found in print are of such a number, that the whole area remains a mystery. Convictions of many persons subjectively felt to be soundly based are neither provable nor falsifiable, though speculation about the Beyond is one of the most attractive of pastimes, does no harm, and may be of inestimable value for coping by certain individuals. I am myself one of those latter, and I know many others.

I. Does Consciousness Survive Death?

As I have already stated that afterlife is my premise, I will only nod in the direction of this question. Last year an exchange of controversial views typified discussions we often hear about life after death. *The Christian Parapsychologist* is an English quarterly edited by Canon Michael Perry for the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies. Editor Perry, priest of the Church of England, and also a member of this Academy's Advisory Council, referred last September to his March 1998 editorial which suggested "that there was no absolutely compelling evidence, either for the Resurrection of Jesus or for the positive interpretation of parapsychological data, but that they were still matters of faith." (Perry 1998) The Editor went on to say that some of his readers had objected to such tentative acceptance of parapsychological evidence as proof of life after death and printed a letter from one of them in the same issue. Mr. James Anderson contended:

> Dear Canon Perry,
>
> I was very interested in your editorial, *Faith and Certainty*, in the March edition and particularly in your comment that there is no consensus as to what parapsychological evidence proves regarding life after death.
>
> While this is undoubtedly true as regards the population at large, I would suggest that among those who have really studied the evidence closely, there is a consensus. In the last hundred years or so, six men and one woman investigated the

matter probably at greater depth than anybody else; F.W.H.Myers, Richard Hodgson, Oliver Lodge, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Colin Wilson, Ian Currie and Robert Crookall – all people of high intellectual calibre, though (I believe) only one of them, Crookall, was a Christian. ...

[Then there are brief quotations from the conclusions of these witnesses, followed by Mr.Anderson's comment.]

Yet the Christian Church at large seems strangely reluctant to discuss the subject. (The Rev.Aelwyn Roberts calls its teaching about it 'limp and wimpish.') Perhaps it is afraid of the old gibe about 'pie in the sky when you die.' Yet if only it could make the conclusions of such formidably intelligent experts more well-known, this might do something to break down the all-consuming materialism of our age. Of course, believing in life after death will not make anybody a Christian; but it just might be the first step in the right direction.

Yours sincerely, James Anderson
4 Church Rd., Penarth
South Glamorgan CF 64 1AE
(copied with permission)

To these words I will add a statement by the Academy's own esteemed researcher Frank Tribbe, whose *Trinity of Wholeness* was published in 1998:

"Just in our lifetimes we have seen much change in the public attitude toward Spirit Survival of Bodily Death, and now, in my view, the *breadth* of Psychical Research after a hundred years clearly establishes the reality of Survival." ... Tribbe then summarizes 12 cases which *I* see as strong indications, and 24 which he terms "solidly evidential" (1997, 1998) of life af ter death. His sources include Ian Stevenson, Karlis Osis, Harold Sherman, and others well known. They might have included other psychic pioneers like Edgar Cayce, Johannes Greber (1932), as well as J.B. and Louisa Rhine. He does cite many more recent experiences of people known to himself personally, but not as well publicized. The mid-century work of Jane Roberts has bequeathed to us a whole library now in the Yale University archives, and a contemporary collection being made by Rhea White, just noticed in the distinctive *Science Frontiers* by W.R. Corliss (1999), will be another.

My conviction is entirely with Anderson and his sources, Tribbe and his, and I believe probably with Perry who is a man of faith. I see no point at all in mortal life if it begins and ends with a few years or decades of the bizarre buffeting we get from the twists and turns of every day's common experience. As we could concern ourselves indefinitely (and for skeptics inconclusively) with the pros and cons

of survival, I will end this section with an observation by the sage Sri Aurobindo. --

..." the spirit of doubt doubts for its own sake, for the sake of doubt... Mental positions always differ, moreover, and it is well known that people can argue forever without one convincing the other. ... If anybody gets over his fundamental doubts, it is by the growth of the psychic in him or by an enlargement of his consciousness, not otherwise. Questions which arise from the spirit of enquiry, ...as a part of a hunger for knowledge, can be answered, but the 'spirit of doubt' is insatiable and unappeasable." (Aurobindo 1971, 3rd impression 1979, p.162)

CSICOPS, please take note.

I I. What Indications Are Observable of a Life After Death Beginning in This Life?

All my research and reading, my own life experience, and observation of others' lives, point to my conclusion that if life does continue after phjysical death, we can have clear intimations of it during this earth life quite aside from the more dramatic NDEs being reported in growing numbers.

These intimations are largely psychic in nature and in their lingering effects on our consciousness. (l) Our empathy with those who struggle to stay afloat in muddy water is more than simple admiration. It's a powerful challenge to us to swim upstream ourselves when we find ourselves in muddy water. The fortitude of a Stephen Hawking, a Viktor Frankl, a Joni Eareckson , all encased in a kind of helplessness that was no obvious choice of theirs, becomes a problem with which we can identify.

(2) Equally challenging is our wonder and mystification at unexplained childhood achievements, past and present, of individuals who seemed to be picking up threads from some previous beginning. Amadeus Mozart in music, and Nikola Tesla in invention, had more than an interest in their fields; they were outstanding esamples of many who have lived and do live in the **"flow"** of Csikszentmihaly's "optimal experience" for which everyone has at least a modest potential. (1991)

(3) No less impressive are the persons who can tell of stunning synchronicities, deja vu, out- of -body instances, and I like to class with such happenings my own narrow escapes from death, and the psychic dreams which have been shared with me and of which I have had some rare ones of my own.

(4) Then we all have known examples of unshakable goodwill, faith, courage, and other manifestations of steadfastness -- too numerous to mention, and an inspiration to all. We cannot help

resonating with certain persons in our acquaintance, hearsay, in the news or in history. Whenever and wherever they have lived, they survive as models for us. When we ponder on such human beings, we have to realize that something more than a superficial personality trait is involved. -- An intimation of another dimension of life?

(5) More immediate to us can be our reflections upon our own attitude shifts as we look back on our life from the vantage point of later decades. When our tastes in friendship, use of leisure time, employment, choices in spending and acquiring assets, feelings of responsibility have made significant shifts, we very likely took them in stride at the time. Do they suggest a different meaning when looked back upon from the vantage point of a few decades ? For example, have we the same attitude toward commitments we have made at age 52 as we had at ages 12 or 22? What is it about what we casually name maturity that changes a whole worldview? What is it that makes a nightclub less attractive to us, aimless chatting a bore, extended socializing a waste of time?

And where do NDEs, OBEs, PPEs, and EHEs fit into the scene? Once we have a positive awareness of a future foreshadowed in a present lifetime, we do not have to experience the more dramatic manifestations being widely reported in order to develop receptivity to the new perspective. It's our choice; the options are wide open. We can choose to learn new skills with an eye to realizing our furthest potential, exploring ways to cultivate growth, maturity, refinement, purification. With a different eye we examine our all-round adjustment for balance in body, mind and soul [psyche]. Exploration of a fitting mission on which to experiment is our privilege, while we further reflect on the meaning of this earth life and how to effectuate it. The time-honored precept , Know thyself, is a first step but does not happen in one trial; in the course of self-discovery we also find that a new orderliness of lifestyle is required, leading in turn to sustained efforts at self-mastery. Selflessness which has little appeal to a child becomes a reward of adulthood.

Four Examples of Fateful Changes [if time permits]

To illustrate what I am trying to say, I want to share the following anecdotes, starting with a personal one.–

a. In my twenties I was embarrassed but saw no alternative to breaking off engagements on two occasions within a few years, and withdrawing from a third commitment before it could be formalized. At the time I was not sure why I was "letting down" these good men, except that I knew I could not be an adequate wife to any of them. Upon reviewing these events from the vantage point of a few

decades later, I realized that the long-term goals of these partners to make money would not have been compatible with my own, to learn to qualify myself for meaningful service in the world. Apparently I sensed this, though not aware of it at the time. I only knew I ended up in a radical goal shift of my own, from financial analysis to teaching as a career.

b. I have since realized how commonly young persons have these difficult decisions to make. My closest friend in college was looking forward to a rich academic life that beckoned to her. But in our senior year she suddenly renounced it all, lightly setting aside the disapproval of our elderly maiden professors, in favor of being a local farmer's wife and the mother eventually of six children. (That farm has since been declared a historic landmark by the State of Massachusetts, and I believe it was Evelyn's gift of continuity that held it together in the 1930's over the Great Depression.)

c. A key supporter of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation in its national and international spiritual leadership is a man who started out in another promising career in the 1960's. As a bright young electrical engineer he worked for an aeronautics firm which thought so much of him that it soon promoted him to a high spot in ballistic missile design. In writing 30 years later, he commented that in MIT he had not been taught "about relating to people and valuing people, or about valuing life –all life." The concern in his new assignment seemed to him to be focused on efficient killing of people. Soon he realized that "personal glory and financial well-being" would not be enough. "I found that I couldn't work in that situation. That was the beginning of a little bit of growth on my part." (Farmer 1999)

d. Aurobindo Ghose was a young Indian in a well-to-do doctor's family. The doctor sent his two boys to England to be educated privately and to master the English language, with an eye to good positions in the Indian Civil Service back at home. After an absence of 13 years, when Aurobindo returned home with a brilliant record, having mastered several languages (some of them by independent study), and receiving recognition of many other academic achievements, his goal was only the complete independence of his native country. This was an unpleasant shock to his family and to India's British rulers. On pretext of suspicion of the young man's role in a political assassination, Aurobindo was jailed in solitary confinement. It took the system a year to clear him.(Satprem 1991)

Released with some reluctance and still under watchful suspicion, Aurobindo decided to end direct action for the resurgence of India, and go another route to the same goal. So after his

political dedication from 1905 to 1910, he fled to French-ruled Pondicherry and a life commitment to re-educating and re-energizing the spirit of India until his death in 1950. His legacy became the famous Integral Yoga which has practitioners at home and abroad, including the U.S. and Canada. (VanVrekhem 1998, Satprem 1991 (1968), Sri Aurobindo 1996 (1948, but published serially 1914-1921 before being gathered into a book.)

Carl Jung left us some pertinent, practical advice:

"[An aging person] ought to have a myth about death, for reason shows him nothing but the dark pit into which he is descending. Myth, however, can conjure up other images for him, helpful and enriching pictures of life in the land of the dead. If he believes in them, or greets them with some measure of credence, he is being just as right or just as wrong as someone who does not believe in them. But while the man who despairs marches toward nothingness, the one who has placed his faith in the archetype follows the tracks of life and lives right into his death. Both, to be sure, remain in uncertainty, but the one lives against his instincts, the other with them." (Jung 1971)

Carl Jung's voice has been joined by legions of others, in counseling mortal man to let go of the fear of death. For death is a natural transition, about which every person can construct his or her own expectation. Dying is not an ending, but a passing to the next dimension of living.

We can add, take part in the inspiring discussions of redefining terms for their closer and fitter relevance to these times, now that centuries have gone by since the terms' origins. Also, rather than signing up with the multitudes who "don't want to be confused," we are free to look into contemporary speculations, opinions, and statements of belief. These are a veritable treasury of our time, and available in libraries, bookstores among books new and second-hand, and on the Internet. No one's life will be long enough to sample *all* of them as well as all the magazine and newspaper presentations, with the numerous newsletters and "in house" vehicles we can have. Yet every one of them has something to offer. A lot of pondering is going on on our planet; Johannes Greber was sure there was a "Spirit Community of God"--numbers of spirits charged with imparting answers to all mortal questions (1932 - tr.from the German). But we can be sure we have peers to show us a cafeteria of magic choices. -- Aurobindo, Satprem, Van Vrekhem and the Mother on Integral Yoga; Jane Roberts and Robert Butts on the Seth material now stored in the Yale University archives, as well as a host of other channelers who are worth at least a hearing; the respectable academics Charles Hartshorne, David Griffin and

John Cobb on Process Thought at the Claremont School of Theology); the rebels Richard Friedman (1995), Bishop John Shelby Spong (1998), and Matthew Fox, on changes needed in the church, in addition to writers already referred to. -- And these are only a few!

They offer more stimulation and more novelty than TV, a nightclub, or yes, even the Internet.

III. So What About the Content of Life After Death in a Reincarnationist's View?

The title of this paper is **A Reincarnationist's Expectation of the Afterlife.** By this time you know that I, the reincarnationist referred to, have total expectation of an afterlife. So do Theosophists, Kabbalists, followers of New Thought (the Unity, Religious Science and Divine Science churches), the Rosicrucians and New Agers who are believers in reincarnation, and all have their conceptions of its working, and their degrees of conviction. Among the great Eastern religions there are general assumptions of reincarnation as a natural step in human development. Over the Western world there have been and are also many independent believers in the reincarnation form of life after death. An interesting list of modern believers was given by Manly Hall in one of his early books on reincarnation (1946). But this is not the only pattern: thousands of subscribers to the traditional heaven and hell have to be counted among those who believe in life after death, and other models exist, as well, if research is extensively enough pursued.

Rabbi Philip Berg broke the taboo on sharing the Kabbalah with the public. In his books he writes over and over again: The message of the Kabbalah is that we receive not for ourselves alone, but for sharing with others.

"Our souls live forever as part of the endless circle of infinity -- thus, only they, of all human attributes and characteristics, are deemed by Kabbalah to be bona fide expressions of Reality. ...

" The world is One. In the real, the Endless world, peace already reigns supreme. As difficult as it may be to imagine, experiencing as we do only the underside of reality, it is just a matter of time (another illusory concept) before the aspiration for a united world becomes reality here in the World of Illusion.

"Even today, the world operates under the auspices of a single authority, a unified Energy-Intelligence, the name of which is Or En Sof. Even in this violent, transitory, tumultuous sphere of illusion there is an all-embracing aspect of harmony, peace, and unanimity with which each of us can connect. ..." (Berg 1988 v.III, p.157-158)

Rabbi Berg's Or En Sof and confident assertion of a united

world-in- the- making sound like another of the sacred mysteries ,– a God who seems personal but is an infinity we never can know, a Divine Will or Energy which has touched earthlings with a special grace, an omnipotent God who looks lovingly upon our inhumanities to one another without intervening; the list can be lengthened. At the end of it we simply have to say: There are things we can sense, but as yet not know or understand beyond rare glimpses.

Without going into a lengthy enumeration, I can safely say that any conceivable variation on the standard version of the usual reincarnationist model of life after death can undoubtedly be encountered. One teacher makes it a series of terrestrial embodiments as humanbeings. Another allows the possibility of some deviation into animal or other lower life forms of embodiment. Sri Aurobindo's followers believe there will be a tremendous transformation of the whole human species right here on earth, but it will require time to accomplish, though Aurobindo and the Mother by their life work shortened that necessary time. White Eagle of England talks in terms of numbered initiations; Benjamin Creme also thinks in initiations, but not the same number.

This is not the place for all possible versions. For this reason my own choice has been to believe –entirely believe– that reincarnation takes place, but to hold an agnostic position on the mechanics of its operation. I believe the process of reincarnation dovetails with other great natural processes of evolution in some way that I do not need to know until it becomes my experience and validates or corrects the intimations of 30 or more of my life's years.

Meanwhile SUNY brought out a book last year by a Dutch scholar: *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought,* by Dr. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Research Fellow at the Department for the Study of Religions , Utrecht University in The Netherlands, 1998 (1996). Though the book's focus is New Age, the author looks into all aspects of the New Age movement, and includes reincarnation because of the weight in that movement of this model of life after death beliefs.

Hanegraaff used many American sources, but a much larger representation of European sources than we frequently meet. This is a serious and comprehensive scholarly work, with a section of 14 pages devoted entirely to reincarnation in the New Age, and several more references in wider contexts throughout the 580 pages. This author makes clear that Western concepts of reincarnation differ considerably from original ideas in Hinduism and Buddhism; this was my first mild shock, for my own thinking on the subject is from Hinduism, and it never had occurred to me there would be such

great differences. At any rate, this author reported that New Age reincarnation is a "weak, this-worldly" version of what is other-worldly in the East.

For one thing, in the West the New Age talks in terms of "meaningful illusion" as contrasted with the East's concept of maya as *misleading* illusion. Furthermore, the idea that we create our own reality , or have chosen our own present life, is Western rather than Eastern. When the author goes to the topic of the Process and "Mechanics" of reincarnation he finds a large blur, particularly when attention turns on the reincarnating "I", versus "Higher Self". The same area I have found least rewarding to try to explain, Hanegraaff finds vague, inconsistent, and unconvincing. At one point the author quotes one of his sources, Michael Harner, as saying, "After all, none of us really knows what is going on." One area of contrast quite clearly shown by Hanegraaff, however, is striking: the West has embroidered the idea of repeated terrestrial lives until we perfect our earth existence,with some attractive alternatives such as some lives spent in other worlds, under the tutelage of spirit guides, attending classes perhaps, going through graduations to higher status on the road to becoming all that we can be, just as the U.S. Marines advertise.

Isn't it true that all of us who have chosen any metaphysic – and that includes any religion with rare exceptions, and most world views , even the most materialistic– have agreed to wonder about its mysteries of origin, ritual and purpose? We have not committed ourselves to an unconditional belief, only to an open mind. For it's our nature to be curious, and to crave answers. (Haddow 1997) My answer follows Jung's sage advice to the elderly. I will choose to believe what cannot hurt anyone else, live with the unprovability, secure in the corollary of unfalsifiability as well. Continue to question, –yes of course, and if I ever find any theory that answers my big questions as well as does life after death modeled in the theory of reincarnation, I rejoice in the freedom to change my mind. For the time being I sign off on this paper in the full realization that I have yet to find again as much material to ponder on the subject of reincarnation as I have already begun to digest. It's a thrillingly rich and endless prospect; how thankful I am to have lived to know the ecstasy of at least exploring its edges.

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THE NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE AS A DIVINE GIFT FOR PREPARATION FOR LIVING, DYING, DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

Barbara R. Rommer, M.D.

Near-death experiences (NDEs) and death experiences, (whether blissful or less-than positive) may be a divine offering in preparation for continued living, dying, death and the afterlife. These experiences may promote many types of healing including spiritual, psychical and often physical. The NDE will usually allay the person's fear of death by confirming that when one dies, one joins their deceased relatives. NDEs most often happen to people who live for many years after resuscitation and serve many purposes which will be discussed. Descriptions of the other realms vary, as do the descriptions of religious and other beings who are encountered. There are no two identical NDEs, just as there are no two identical souls.

The Near-Death Experience is usually defined as an event which occurs in the absence of a heart beat and respiration. The term was originally coined by Dr. Raymond Moody (Moody 1975). Identical experiences without clinical death can occur with accidents, surgery, childbirth, grieving and marathon running. They can also occur during deep meditation, prayer, when one is slipping into a deep sleep state, and without any apparent antecedent cause. NDEs can be joyful, frightening, or a combination of both. I define a Less Than Positive experience, or LTP, as one which the experiencer interprets in part or whole to be frightening, because it elicits feelings of terror, despair, guilt and/or overwhelming aloneness.

It was previously estimated that one third of all people who come close to death have a near-death experience (Gallup and Proctor 1981). Recent studies suggest that a more accurate estimate of frequency is between 9 and 15% (Greyson 1997). My research suggests that 17.73% of NDEs are of the Less Than Positive variety.

The majority of NDEs (including the LTP experiences) whether occurring in preparation for death or for continuing life, usually decrease or abolish the subject's fear of death. One comes to know that there are realities other than the physical. These events usually confirm that when one dies, he or she goes home to be reunited with deceased loved ones. Most NDEs remind one of things which need to be completed prior to bodily death. There are, however, some major differences between the experiences occurring in terminal hospice patients as compared with those in non-terminally ill subjects.

NDES WHICH OCCUR IN PREPARATION FOR DEATH

The NDE occurring in terminally ill (hospice type) patients has been termed "Nearing Death Awareness" (Callanan and Kelley 1993). There are two major differences between the Nearing Death Awareness experience and the NDE which occurs in acute illness such as with a massive heart attack. The event in a terminal hospice patient usually happens without any dramatic change in their vital signs or

overall physical condition. The acute illness NDE, on the other hand, usually occurs with a full cardiac and respiratory arrest, causing clinical (though transient) death.

The purpose of the Nearing Death Awareness event appears to be different from the NDE occurring in an acutely ill subject. Terminally ill hospice patients have their experience in preparation for death, and they rarely have a life review (Kircher 1996). After their event they are usually fully prepared to let go of this life. The NDE in an acutely ill patient prepares one for continuing life and is often the impetus for living more spiritually. The life review, in particular, may show the person the consequences of his or her previous actions with specific attention to the impact on others.

One continues to grow spiritually until the very moment of physical death. An NDE may give peace and solace not only to the subject, but also to those left behind. My dear husband, Sonny, the light of this lifetime, went to his spirit form in June 1997. We were most happily married for twenty-five years. He was one of the world's greatest skeptics with reference to NDE accounts and other spiritual and religious matters, yet he was very supportive and respectful of my spiritual quest. After rupturing an aortic aneurysm, he developed a multiplicity of the most serious complications which resulted in a prolonged hospital stay. Although he was on a respirator, he was alert and able to write for the majority of the twelve weeks. He had a deeply profound near-death experience and described it in great detail. He determined the very day and moment that his respirator was discontinued. He made that decision in large part because of the truths which he came to know while in the other realm. He did, indeed, grow spiritually until the very second that he went into spirit. Sonny's NDE not only gave me peace and solace, but also reconfirmed many higher truths.

NDES WHICH OCCUR IN PREPARATION FOR LIFE

These incidents most often happen to people who live for many years after they are resuscitated. They may occur for a variety of reasons. They may remind us why we are here. One may have a specific lesson to learn this lifetime, or may have a very specific thing to complete.

David was clinically dead for 75 minutes. He had suffered for years with severe ulcerative colitis. At age 32 he underwent a six hour surgery during which his total colon was removed and an ileostomy ("bag") was performed. He developed complications during the surgery which escalated to a full-blown cardiac and respiratory arrest. This was obviously such an unusual event (with reference to resuscitation with full medical recovery after a lengthy 75 minutes) that it was reported by his cardiologist and published in the well-respected Journal of the American Medical Association (Shocket and Rosenblum 1967). During his NDE David received the knowledge that he would return to raise and educate six children. At the time he had none. Several years later his brother and sister-in-law were killed together in a plane crash. David and his wife did, indeed, raise their four nieces and nephews as well as their own two children.

One may return from an NDE acknowledging for the first time that this life is something of value, a precious gift. Rudie is a delightful gentleman who had his NDE in 1996 when he was 53 (Rommer 2000) He stated:

"I have AIDS. In 1996 I was hospitalized with both kidney and liver failure. I had to have even 20 more transfusions because my blood didn't clot. I was dying. I was suddenly transported to this very peaceful, bright place. There was an angel there. She was wearing traditional angel clothes, the white gown and wings. She was fairly young, in the 30 range, with brown medium length hair. I felt love from her. She said: 'We want you to go back'. I asked her what my purpose is. What is my reason for living? She said: 'Even though you are no longer a formal teacher at the university, everyone you touch you teach. You are going to be touching a lot of people. That's your purpose. Go back, teach and love people and just be yourself.'

Then I was in yet another place, very peaceful. I'd had a friend who died of AIDS in 1989. When he died he looked very ill and emaciated. But there he was with long blond hair and he was an angel! He said: 'Rudie, you can't stay. You're not finished. You have too much to do.' We actually talked about friends, how they're doing and how I'm coping. He told me to enjoy my grandson and let him get to know me. Now, he had already been dead for 7 years when my grandson was born. Suddenly I felt this burst of energy in my chest and then I was back in the bed in ICU. The specialist said to me: 'You shouldn't be alive. We did absolutely nothing. I don't know what you believe in, but you should believe in a higher power.' Within four days my kidneys were functioning at 100% and my liver was steadily getting better."

Rudie demonstrated many significant life-altering changes post-NDE. He said about the AIDS:

"I call it my tragic gift. It's tragic because of all the devastation it's caused and all the lives that have been lost. But it's a gift, because I've really grown to know who I am and have been allowed to meet so many wonderful people. It's my best friend and my worst friend. I hate it and I love it. Now I'm speaking often at the university about living with AIDS. When you work with AIDS patients you have to help them find meaning, because if you don't then they are going to die. You find meaning in your life, and you find a purpose, and you find value. I think that summarizes why we're here, but each of us has to find that out for ourselves."

Many experiencers, in preparation for continued living, return with the affirmation that they will never practice self-destructive behavior again. This is especially the case with the less than positive experiencers. 45 year old Jay had his LTP experience at 36 (Rommer 2000). He was raised in a Jewish home and moved to Las Vegas to work on a newspaper. He admitted "being into gambling and drugs". He stated:

"I was at a party. I think somebody slipped me some PCP. I died. I left my body and went into an outer darkness, and it was eternity. It was an incredibly painful void. It felt like forever. I know it was hell. I was in hell! It was the absence of everything: the absence of love and emotions, just an absolute emptiness. I will never forget the pain. It wasn't physical at all. That's what was so terrifying. It was emotional, psychological, and spiritual pain. My spirit had descended into this place. I saw my life somewhere along the way. It was very brief. I saw it as a warning. I self-destructed myself. I cried up to God and

it was only by the power of God and the mercy of God that I was permitted to come back. It was just so intense! I think it was a warning from God. I want to tell you that no matter how bad it is here, it can't compare to there.

I think what happened was a blessing in disguise. I've stopped drugs, moved back to Florida, and now I'm in Bible college. I know how to love now, both myself and others. I also know how to laugh, mostly at myself. Life on earth is brief, but eternity is forever. I was permitted another chance to change my behavior on earth. You need to tell everyone that there is no finality with death." Jay's story confirms what Golda Meir said: "Those who don't know how to weep with their whole heart, don't know how to laugh either."

The NDE may give one confirmation that they are loved unconditionally and that there is total forgiveness of all indiscretions. The life review is one of the most fascinating aspects of a deep core near-death experience. When one is blessed to have a life review it prompts him or her to review past choices, actions and reactions. It is a true learning experience. As Aristotle said: "The unexamined life is not worth living." After a detailed life review one often comes back willing to take full responsibility not only for their past actions, but also for future choices. Persons return to the earth plane understanding and confirming Ghandi's statement: "My life is my message". Terry's near-death experience demonstrates these points (Rommer 2000).

"It happened when I had a cardiac arrest during surgery for morbid obesity. I weighed 475 pounds and I was dying. My kidneys were failing, my feet were swollen, I had already had heart failure, and my circulation was bad. I looked like this big egg walking down the street. So I was on the operating table with intravenous fluids going in. The surgeon said to me: 'I'll see you in a little while'. I looked at him and said: 'I'll catch you later.' We both chuckled and that was it.

The next thing I realized I was above looking down on the operating room, watching the doctors and nurses. I died. I saw them giving me the electric paddles. It was like watching a movie with no sound. It was out of synch. I wasn't afraid. I didn't feel dismay, elation or anything. It was like a blank page. That big fat ugly thing down there wasn't me. The person that was up there was me. Up there I was out of my shell, the way I was supposed to be, looking down at something that wasn't me.

Up behind me, way off to my left, was a light. It was like a hallway. There was a shadowy spot and then a light. As I got closer, it was a burst of light with like finger points all the way around it. I wanted to go there. I knew there was peace there. I just knew. I went through another dimension. I didn't have any more cares, no more needs, no more worries, no requirements. I felt totally, absolutely, completely free! But just as I started walking toward the light it was like somebody ran a movie past me. It was my life! And I'll tell you something. There was no cutting out the good parts or the bad parts. I saw everything: all the good things I'd done, all the horrible things I'd done, even the things I was ashamed of and didn't want people to know. You see it all.

It was like film clips. I saw myself at three, on the playground at an Ottawa Park. They stole my little red wagon. I saw myself walking down the street with

my grandmother, telling her it was stolen. She made my grandfather buy me another one, and they stole it again. I saw myself taking a ride with my grandfather in his Hudson Hornet convertible. I lived each piece of the life review. It's not like watching a movie. It was really traumatic to me. I lived a part where I was six-teen and my parents went away to Detroit and left me to celebrate my birthday by myself. I saw when I was twenty-two and married. You know how you make a picture collage? Well, this was a collage of my lifetime. I saw Christmas when I was eighteen. My mother bought my sister and brother a little present, but said to me: 'Honey, we couldn't afford to buy you anything.' It hurts! No matter what, it hurts! I try to live my life without hurting anyone.

So it all hangs out in the life review, Kid. There's nothing missing. When I grew up as a Catholic, you were told that God will judge you. That isn't true. You are your judge. You are the hardest, most unsympathetic judge there is when you judge yourself. I guess I'm not ready to go because I haven't learned enough yet. I didn't want to come back, but for some reason I looked back and saw my wife and kids in the surgery waiting room and knew I had to.

I don't look at life the same anymore. I don't get mad like I used to. I used to have a very, very vicious temper. Life is like a membrane. It's so fragile that if you're not careful you will step through the membrane and it's over. People don't appreciate how valuable and fragile our lives are, and they abuse themselves, thinking their bodies are immortal. There're not."

One may come back from an NDE to the earth plane feeling One not only with the Creator, but with every other person and with all that is. As one of my mentors, Patricia Hayes, said: "We are many, yet we are one. We are mirrors of each other. You cannot love or hate something about another person unless it reflects something you hate or love about yourself." Yolanda had a profound NDE secondary to the trauma of losing a child (Rommer 2000). In her words:

"I had the hell, the in between, and the heaven experience. First I was in a dark cool place. I felt beings around me, but didn't see them. At the end of the dark place was a light, a cold light, and I was being pushed toward it by these invisible presences. The closer I got, the more evil it felt. Finally, I got close enough to see. This'll sound weird, but it looked like the gates of hell with millions of demon eyes looking through it. It was very cold and I was terrified! I knew it was hell and I didn't want to go there. Then, somehow, I started going backwards the other way.

I went into this gray void where it felt like there was absolutely nothing at all, like I was in outer space. I was floating but didn't have control, and was stuck, trapped, and scared to death. Then came this sound from deep down inside me calling out: 'God, God.' That's when I did this life review thing. It like zipped on, but it was more concentrated at the end, so the last years came out real clear. I saw everything that I had ever done to that day, and that it was meaningless and useless and it had brought me to that place. I felt very weak, and hopeless, and useless.

This is weird, but when I called out to God, a kind of light, like spiritual lightening, struck my head and went through me, and then something inside me

exploded. When this happened I felt like a crackling and tingling in my mind, in my brain, and I felt tingling through my whole body. Every cell became energized and alive. It was traumatizing, but it was wonderful. And the light, just like you read about, was just all knowledge, all life, all beauty, and all love. It was saying: 'No, you're not that person. This is who you are. I love you totally and unconditionally'. I believed that was coming from God. I was told: 'You're making this all too complicated' and that 'there is nothing on earth that matters except learning to love and receive love'. That's what it's all about. God is everything. Energy is everything.

After this, the whole world was different. Everything was alive and pulsating with this beautiful energy, and I was awe-struck. Now I really see the beauty in people. I grew up in another country where there was a lot of religion, but a lot of killing, too. Because of that I became agnostic, not so much about God, but about my Christian religion. The God I met in the experience was totally different from the God I had learned about. I feel that there is a unity, and every tiny little thing has purpose and definition and meaning. It all has to do with spiritual insight. You can look in the yellow pages and find spirituality if your eyes are open, and you can read the Bible and walk straight to hell if they're closed!"

One's soul may yearn for knowledge which is only available in the other dimensions. Tommy is a nurse at one of the hospitals which I attend. In his NDE he found himself initially observing other beings sitting on beautiful grass, dressed in robes or togas, listening intently to a lecture. He saw a river in the background. Nearby was a building which was similar to the style of the Acropolis. He went inside and realized that it was a library. He said:

"There was a whole section of books on astrology and palmistry. I started to dive into them, but someone told me that I wasn't allowed to read those. He pointed to some others that I was allowed to touch. I wanted to know about my birds. I raise them for a hobby. So I went to the bird section and took out this huge book. In it was not only every bird that ever was, but every bird that will ever be! Then there was a section on people. I got to look at my book. I'll never forget it. It opened to the middle. If you flipped back then you got to see your past and if you flipped ahead you saw your future. But most of it had this grayish film, so you couldn't read it. I could see the day I was born, but grayed over was the day I would die. But there were also sections of my past grayed over. I consciously know what happened as a kid. But the impression I got was that I either have to repeat a specific lesson I didn't learn or repeat a specific incident."

Near-death experiences may prepare one for a loved one's future death. Marsha was 31 in 1973 when she had a NDE secondary to drowning. Her youngest of three sons was six at the time. She said:

"I could never in my life explain to you the light, the tranquility, the beauty. I thanked God for allowing me to die. Dying is beautiful. But a few months ago my youngest son was killed, burned in a house fire. The fire marshal said that he was totally burned. They only had a tiny part of his torso where he had made it to the shower and turned on the cold water. They said, though, that his first breath scorched his lungs with temperatures about 3000 degrees. The autopsy sent word

to us that he did not suffer. He died of smoke inhalation, not burns. And I'm at peace because I know from my experience that God gave me when I drowned that it's the most beautiful feeling. So we have comfort because we know he died instantly, and I have comfort because of my near-death experience. And speaking with you about all of this has healed me even more."

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE AFTERLIFE REALM

It is logical to me that the afterlife realm has been described in a multiplicity of ways. Just imagine if someone from another planet asked a human from earth to describe this planet. A person who lives in the Amazon jungle would describe his earth quite differently than a person living in South Florida, on the banks of the Egyptian Nile, in Beiging, near the Colorado Rockies, or in the white snows of Alaska. Yet, all of these places are, indeed, on earth.

I have interviewed several people who described the "classic" pearly gates. Mary is one of my medical patients. She was temporarily dead as a result of anaphylaxis. She said:

"I saw heaven's portals. They looked like partially opened iridescent pearly gates. They shone, like they were lit from within, lit by the heavenly lights. I think if you saw me, I would have looked like a cloud."

Reina had a cardiac arrest secondary to a severely irregular heart rhythm. She felt herself leave her body through the top of the head. She went through a tunnel, feet first and then she said:

"I was in this room, high up in the clouds. It had three walls. One was missing. I was dressed in white. There was a staircase not attached to anything. All the people I had ever known in my whole life who had died came up that staircase, one my one. A person would come to me, smile, then leave, and the next one would come. They were all dressed in black. Then a loud, loud voice that covered the whole area said it wasn't my time, that my mission wasn't complete."

There are as many descriptions of the afterlife realm as there are near-death experiencers. There are descriptions of magnificent gardens with singing fountains, and flowers which sway in unison, communicating with each other. I've had described a prayer switchboard, high up in the clouds, where angels or spiritual guides are dispatched to answer prayers which are received. There have been descriptions of magnificent cities of light, canyons, transparent buildings, huge waiting rooms, and ocean with beach settings.

DESCRIPTIONS OF RELATIVES

When deceased relatives are seen in the other realm, they are usually well and at their prime. Even when one's physical body is diseased and frail, the astral body (or energy double) remains whole and perfectly well. Even if a relative went into spirit after amputation of a limb, he or she is seen quite whole by their loved one during the NDE. One of my patients had an NDE and saw her mother, who before her death was not only paralyzed on one side, but also had disfiguring burns on her face from a fire. Yet, she appeared to my patient freely mobile and with smooth, creamy appearing non-scarred facial skin. She walked and moved all of her extremities with grace.

Another patient had lost her mother to end stage chronic obstructive lung disease. She had become emaciated and used oxygen constantly for several years. Her skin was always mottled and cyanotic. Yet, in the experience she appeared young and healthy. When her eyes met her daughter's with recognition, the deceased mother exaggerated deep breaths and started to twirl and dance to show off her freedom from physical illness. I have had several people who had lost siblings at a young age, say that they saw them and spoke with them on the other side, and that they had grown and had the appearance of the age that they would have been had they not died when they did.

DESCRIPTIONS OF RELIGIOUS AND OTHER BEINGS

Many subjects have described a Being of Light. Diego, a Spanish speaking gentleman, lives in Bogota, Columbia. He is now in his fifties and had his profoundly spiritual NDE 12 years ago. When he saw my name among NDE researchers, he remembered me from his near-death experience. His account is surely one the most precious jewels in my crown of near-death experiences. His Spanish wife, a poet, translated every word into English as we went along. Diego said about the Being of Light:

> "He is the most exquisite core of harmony and delight, allowing us to rest in our own forgetfulness. He is the fountain of our final alloy. Our brain's reasonable analysis of our earth conventions cannot explain or define what one feels near the Being of Light. The wisdom and the love are of such dimension, the limitations of our brain cannot allow its grasp. But when we are in that dimension, we do understand. The Being cannot be labeled by us, for limitation cannot define the immense. We could, of course, project our cultural upbringing and say He is Jesus, or Moses or Buddha. But I, myself, saw Him only as the most wonderful Being of Light. I give Him no name.
>
> There were guides who accompanied me on my journey. They were humanoid. Their eyes were identical to ours, but bigger. They were slightly higher than myself, and gave me the impression of being more elastic in their movement. They had a lucid consciousness and a wonderful sense of humor, as you would expect from very wise beings. Before finally returning to my body, I saw them look at each other smilingly. It was at that moment that they told me I couldn't interfere with any part of my future, that I had intended to regulate." (Diego was given a tremendous amount of information about the future of this life-time, including the time of his death.) "I didn't feel they were angels because this concept is a human one, and they were just wise beings of light."

Celia is another one of my medical patients (Rommer 2000). She was involved in a head-on collision in 1986. Her NDE was at the time of a cardiac arrest during the first of numerous surgeries. She said:

> "After I was separate from my body, which was on the operating table, I was with God. He was on my right. He had His arm around me, holding me like a father would hold a child. He was giving me a view of everything. I was just kind of hanging out there with God. I was just like a dangling participle up there. He's an old great man. He had a beard and long hair. He's like an old hippie. He was male. There was a light radiating from Him, a brightness. I think how He looked to me was probably my interpretation of what I think God should

look like. He's patient, quiet, loving, adoring, stern and definitive. I was shown my past and it stunk. You can't lie to yourself. But I was very, very fortunate to have been given another chance. We had a conversation without really talking. Maybe it was telepathic. It's like He was telling me that if I want to come back to earth then this is what He expects of me. I felt He was showing me that I had been headed in the direction of ruin and finally got there. He asked me if I would do something better with my life if He gave me more time. I said 'Yes' and you know the rest."

ONE'S SPIRITUAL FORM WHEN OUT OF BODY

Some people describe their out of body form as identical to their usual physical form, while others describe themselves as pure energy. Celia, whose story we just discussed, described her out of body form:

"It was a ghost-type of thing. I had a gown on. I didn't see my legs or anything. I was sure I had from my abdomen up. I didn't have any pain and I don't think I had my scars. I absolutely saw through my eyes and felt with my heart. But I knew my body was attached to something."

Sadhana is a truly gifted psychic (Rommer 2000). Her NDE occurred when she developed food poisoning while studying in India. She said of her out of body state:

"I went to the light, then through the light, and beyond, and beyond, and beyond. You go beyond time and, eventually, you go beyond space. You also go beyond having any body, whatsoever, and after that you have only awareness. It is such a freedom dropping the body, not to be confined. You're never perfectly well, but you don't know that until you don't have a body. As you rise further you come into such bliss, not joy, but bliss. Then you go further, beyond even experiencing. You find it is a freedom to have no emotions, no experiences, and if you keep going then you eventually reach the Godhead. You are totally dissolved. There is no consciousness. There is no separate consciousness. There is a vastness, and you are dissolved in whatever words we use for the Godhead."

Randolph is another of my medical patients. He had a cardiac arrest when he was 19 years old. He stated:

"There I was looking down from the emergency room ceiling on myself, the doctor, nurses, and my uncle who was crying. There was a green misty cool menthol-type fog coming up through my interior, enveloping me. I felt whirling, like a tornado. It went beyond speed. It was almost like a flash of light, like an electrical thing and then zap, I was back. When I was up there I could almost visualize myself, like a ghosty-type form. I wasn't a physical presence, but I was in the shape of a human body, like if you turned it into pure electricity, electrical particles. I had no attachment to my body. Whatever form I was, I was definitely smaller than normal. Maybe our soul is the size of the pinhead of a needle. Who the heck knows? But that sound I heard was an energy thing, like when a transformer blows."

IS THERE EVIDENCE OF EXISTENCE AFTER BODILY DEATH?

I would like to refer the reader to excellent articles dealing with this question by Angus H. Haddow (1998) and by V. Krishnan (1985). Kenneth Ring, long time NDE researcher, has interviewed many experiencers who were congenitally blind.

Many of them described things they "saw" which was verified by normally sighted people (Ring 1997).

Tony was the husband of one of the Holy Cross Hospital nursing supervisors in Fort Lauderdale. Just as he was being prepped in the operating room (in a hospital in Minnesota) for open heart surgery, he had a cardiac arrest. He was clinically dead for nine minutes. During that time he found himself first "standing" next to the surgeons who were trying to resuscitate him, and then he ascended to the top of the surgical suite. He understood what was happening and wondered if his wife, Pat, knew what was going on. He immediately found himself in the surgical waiting room, watching her calling up north on the telephone, crying. Whatever he thought, immediately manifested. He thought that he just wanted to go home to Florida, and suddenly there he was!

There are some especially interesting points about this experience. First, none of Pat and Tony's children were given keys to their new home. Second, Pat had arranged with a neighbor to take the mail out of the mailbox every day and gave her a key to water the plants. The neighbor was also given a big cardboard box. She was supposed to put every day's mail in that box and take it home with her so she could tell Pat every night what bills had come. The day of Tony's cardiac arrest, apparently the neighbor left the mail on their dining room table when she came inside that morning to quickly water the plants. Tony, in an out of body state, "saw" every single piece of mail that was strewn all over the table. But what is even more significant, and humorous, is that he "saw" his son (who was not supposed to have a key) "involved with" his girlfriend (whom neither Pat nor Tony knew about) on the den floor. Tony accurately described the girl, their clothes nearby, and some other specific details, such as the remains of take-out Chinese food. Everything Tony described, including the mail, was verified by the son, the girlfriend, and the neighbor. This story, to me, is proof of out of body existence.

As the saying goes, there are a million stories in the naked city. I have presented but a few. My humble plea is that we might all be open to the higher truths and listen with open minds and open hearts to the NDEs. One may become healed and one may grow spiritually when one, actually or vicariously, experiences a near-death experience.

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DYING TO THE PERSONAL SELF AND BECOMING THE TRUE SELF

Rabia Clark, Ph.D.

Dying happens during life, as well as at the end of it. We all go through many "little" deaths. At each new stage of life we must put aside our preconceived notions of who we were. We are not the child who we used to be, nor the youth we remember. We are not yet those selves we will become as life continues. Stages of development at a transpersonal (or spiritual) level are not common, or even desired by the average person. This presentation will consider the journey of transformation of the individual self to the awakened and realized Self. Examples of stages in the transformation process of Sufi traditions will be the focus. They call this process "Dying Before Death."

The transformation of the self is thought of as a spiritual evolution, and can be accomplished through the medium of spiritual practices, mainly with the guidance of a teacher in a school of spiritual studies. Masters, saints, prophets, visionaries and the God-intoxicated have gone through many of these deaths of the personal self. At each step the threat of extinction is present, and a choice is made whether to enter the next phase by dying again to what one thinks one is. At the last only the Essence, or state of Unity is left. This might be compared to actors who play many roles on the stage of life, and have forgotten who they really are.

Examples of beings who have undergone this process of uncovering their true selves include: Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, the Buddha, Jelaluddin Rumi, Mehr Baba, Rabi'a al' Adawiyyia, St. Seraphim of Sarov, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, and Hildegard of Bingen.

THE EXPERIENCE OF UNITY

The *monistic paradigm* is an important concept in Eastern philosophy. Monistic philosophy and psychology are founded on the assumption that there is an underlying unity in all existence. The monistic view sees the world of diverse forms as illusory, as are time, space, and causality. In the monistic paradigm, we can awaken ourselves from these illusions and realize the experience of unity, where

all distinctions are transcended. Very few Western philosophers (such as: Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, and Franklin Merrell-Wolff) take the monistic view. It is, however, common in the East. Among the groups which focus on this view are Vedanta, Buddhism, and Sufism.

In the Vedanta tradition the illusions of the world emanate from pure consciousness, in a manner similar to a dream emanating from a dreamer. When awakening from a dream, we realize that the dream was unreal. In order to awaken from the illusions of life we must give up the identification with the melodramas surrounding us, becoming unattached, and identify with the center of universal consciousness which is within each of us. The final realization is an identity with the Self, God, or unitary consciousness. This is variously called enlightenment, moksha, nirvana, and illumination. (Ajaya, 1983, pp. 36-37)

The Buddhist system has only recently been written about in English in a way which compares it to ego psychology. Like the Sufi model, it includes the levels of higher functioning which Western systems omit (see Wilbur, 1986).

This idea of creating a change in the self-concept from dualistic to holistic through certain spiritual practices is common to a number of the esoteric traditions. Sufi orders are among these groups. Idries Shah (1977), Hazrat Inayat Khan (1960, 1981), Pir Vilayat Khan (1981), and Mohammed Shafii (1988) are among the writers who reflect the multifaceted Sufi viewpoint. The Sufi traditions have been recorded in books and poetry for over a thousand years. The extensive and beautiful writings of Ibn al Arabi and Jelaluddin Rumi are among the best known today.

Sufism is often thought of as the esoteric or mystical branch of Islam, although Sufis also belong to other religions. Sufis have also been persecuted and outlawed by strict Islamic groups over the centuries, for going beyond the beliefs of Islam, in a mystical way, and for political reasons. The Sufis did not develop their process alone, but were in contact with Greek philosophy and applied some of those ideas with the Quranic vantage-point in developing their training. (For an example see Abdel-Kader, 1962, pp. 104-111, shows how Abu'l Qasim al-Junayd (ninth century A.D.) may have been influenced by the third century philosopher Plotinus.)

A small group of disciples of the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) in the 7th century A.D., focused on the esoteric or mystical teachings of Islam. From them eventually arose teachers who founded many different schools of Sufism. Their emphasis is on the belief that "There is nothing except God," expressed in the phrase *"La illaha illa 'llah hu."* This states that God (Allah) is the only reality. The various

Sufi schools differ somewhat in their teaching methods, according to each tradition. Some of the most common techniques used to create spiritual transformation include music, dancing, poetry, recitation of the sacred names of God, breath practices, dream interpretation, and group meditations, guided by the teacher.

The candidate for initiation in the Sufi Order International, attends group classes and begins simple practices to do at home, given by the teacher. These usually involve various techniques for stilling the thoughts, emotions, and overcoming body discomfort. Being able to focus the mind without being distracted is the first level of mastery required. These are called concentration practices. Meditation practices come at a later stage, after initiation, where the focus is on repeating the names of God in Arabic (as found in the Quran), to bring forth those qualities in the student (for example: ya Jamil - Divine Beauty). There and are also practices for purposes of healing, solving personal problems, the more advanced practices, which promote states of unity. These practices are also done with prayers, breath practices and visualizatins in a regular routine, given by the teacher. The student's progress is frequently checked by having an appointment with the teacher, who goes over them with the student, or they just sit in silence together. (This interview is done in various ways, depending on tradition.) The exchange of energy and consciousness from teacher to student is part of the transmission process.

The majority of Sufi groups require their students to follow the Islamic religious requirements: the profession of faith (*shahada*), prayer 5 times a day, fasting during the month of Ramadan, tithing, and the journey to Mecca (when feasible) These disciplines begin the process of spiritual change in the individual. The Muslim *adab*, or morals and manners, are part of the Sufi culture (see Al-Kaysi, 1989). I remember visiting Sheikh Suleman Dede, the head of the Mevlevi order (in Konya, Turkey). A man was brought to Dede, and asked him the question, "Where can I find a spiritual teacher?" He seemed unaware that the elderly gentleman to whom he was speaking was a great spiritual being. Dede said to him, "Beome a Muslim first."

This is called the *sharia,* the law, which is the first level of Islam. A second level is the *tariqa,* which is walking on the mysical path. The third level is *haquiqa* , the Supreme Reality, being united with the Divine Beloved. The candidate, or apprentice, may have to give as much as 1-3 years trial before being initiated into traditional spiritual schools, depending on the tradition. During this time he/she will be given tasks to do for the school and through these, learn how to behave in a correct manner with the teacher and students. This involves humility, patience, and taming the ego.

The student (or *mureed)* may, for example, be assigned to work preparing food for the group. The kitchen-master will be observing their ability to concentrate, to control their emotions, to be faithful to the requirements of the work, and to submit to guidance. What looks like a menial job may well be the path to the door of the spiritual school. Sheikh Suleman Dede worked in the kitchen of the Mevlevi school for over 20 years, going from novice to kitchen-master, and learning how to be a teacher through some of those experiences. The Sufi "schools" do their teaching amidst everyday life situations. The student may wait for some "spiritual" discussion to happen, while being unaware that they are in the midst of the transformation process.

Many of the Sufi practices and prayers are done in Arabic. Initiates are also given a meditation regime appropriate to their behavior and stage of spiritual development as determined by the intuition and training of the teacher. The basic intention of Sufi schools is the same, to provide methods for individuals to change from narrow self-centeredness to become a loving, expansive, and creative expression of the illuminated Self, while living an ordinary life in the world. The work goes beyond the Jungian concept of "individuation," or completeness of personality. It is a journey to the Infinite, a mystical encounter with the Divine Mystery (Vaughan-Lee, 1990, pp. 18-19).

Idries Shah (1977, p. 20) says, Sufism "is not a matter of psychotherapy of this and that kind. . . . How does it work? First of all, since we are talking about the nature of Sufi knowledge: to be a Sufi is to have experience. A Sufi teacher is one who has 'gone beyond' ordinary limits and has become aware of a reality which enables him to see humanity's general and specific condition and other matters in relation to this greater dimension."

In other words, Sufism is not containable between the covers of books, it is experiential, and is based on a student-teacher relationship. These experiences can create a transformation of the person's view of reality, and awareness of their Divine purpose in the world.

SELF (NAFS), STATE (*HAL*), AND STAGE (*MAKKAM*)

The concept of *nafs* is important to understanding the Sufi system of personality transformation. *Nafs* is an Arabic word meaning breath, animal life, soul, spirit, self, individual, substance and essence. In English its closest equivalent would be "personality" or "self." Since this is not an exact match, the Arabic word will be used. This is an old concept, going back at least to Avicenna (died 1037 A.D.), who wrote extensively about basic personality structures and different types of *nafses.* Avicenna integrated Sufi ideas with Aristotle's writings in *De Anima* to develop an integrated and holistic concept of personality structure.

As in many Eastern philosophies, the Sufis consider the *nafs* to be a property of not only humans, but also, at the lower levels, of plants and animals. There are different kinds or levels of *nafs*. The first level are the vegetative *nafs* (*nafs-i-nebati).* found in humans, plants, and animals. They have to do with nutrition, growth and reproduction. Then animals and humans also have the animal *nafs* (*nafs-i-haiwani).* These consist of the driving forces (sexual or libidinous) and the rage forces (including the fight or flight reflex). Shafii (1988) has a beautiful comparison of Sufi concepts about the unconscious (*batin*) and Freud's structural theory of id, ego and superego (pp. 22-44).

Beyond the animal and vegetative *nafs* are *the human nafs* (*nafs-i-insani),* , which involve the intellect and heart. Then come the accusing *nafs* (*nafs-i-lawwama).* This is closest to the superego in ego psychology. It includes the negative features of guilt, shame, fear, self-blame and self-accusation. And also the humanistic and universal values: ability to delay gratification, sublimation of animal urges and transformation of these urges into love. On a more detached yet still personal level are self-observation, introspection and psychospiritual awareness (p.187). The Sufis also include four further states which go beyond the present psychological constructs of human development in Western ego psychology. The last are levels are the: inspired *nafs,* secure *nafs,* fulfilled *nafs,* and complete *nafs.* (There are other ways of describing the *nafs* in different Sufi groups.) The main idea is that of progressing through a series of developmental levels.

These levels of *nafs* may be like floors in a building. The basement is like the vegetative self, the ground floor the animal self, the human self the second floor, the blaming self the third floor, etc. The higher the floors the less personal and constricted the consciousness, as it rises higher, or becomes more expanded, the person is more detached from the everyday world and from prior personal identifications, attachments, and habits.

Acting with the *nafs* are the states and stages of human development (*hal* and *makkam).* The *hal,* or state, is a short-term peak experience, given by the grace of God. It may be a sudden revelation or vision, like a flash of lightening, and then the experience disappears. The *makkamat* are more enduring stages or stations along the way. One seven-stage outline of them includes: repentance, eagerness, piety, poverty, patience, trust in God, and contentment (Angha, 1991, p.34). (Sufi schools may have as many as 40 to 100 stages.) Each of these stages occurs at the level of a particular *nafs.* For example, repentance is at the stage of the human nafs, and abstinence with the accusing nafs. A person can identify those stages they have left behind, but usually are not aware of their present level.

The teacher, however, can observe these stages, and give practices which, if done faithfully, propel the student to change from one stage to another. The teacher's assessment of the stages comes both from observation of the student and by intuition and psychic abilities. For example, if the teachers sit with the student in silence, they are able to intuitively hear which practices the student has been doing, and to perceive the student's state of consciousness. This is true in a group meeting as well. The teacher can assess whether or not an individual is keeping up with the level of the group. It's somewhat like finding that person's radio station, or energy wave.

I remember an incident involving Pir Vilayat Khan at a week-long group retreat. We had had huge rains (which frequently happens when Pir Vilayat is around, even in the desert) and were doing our work sitting outside on a dry driveway. Pir was leading the group into Buddhist stages of samadhi. At one point he said, (from my recollection) "Well some of you have made it here, and some haven't, so let's go back down a little and help you catch up." He was not only in a transcendent state, but was able to have what is termed "co-consciousness," being able to speak and evaluate the students' levels, and staying in his own state at the same time.

Sufis have developed meditation practices which consciously bring about the evolution of these stages and states, in order to transform students from ego-centered to God-centered and awakened (self-realized, illuminated). This elaborate system is not well known even in Sufi groups, as it was mostly revealed to the teachers, who pass down the information orally and experientially. The average student knows the teacher is creating a transformative process, but they are not intellectualizing or analyzing it while going through it. They are usually acutely aware of their undeveloped station and how far it is from those of students who have been in the process longer, beacuse new and advanced students often attend the same group activities.

Few Sufi students attain the higher stages of realization, as it requires arduous and long effort, great dedication, a deep yearning for unity with the Divine Beloved, while, at the same time, being immersed in working and family life. The process is enhanced by having to face life's problems, while the teacher observes the students and how they deal with their challenges. It is not a path for monks, but for those who are "in the world, but not of it." It is not a process of criticism of the faults of the student by the teacher, but of bringing out the Divine qualities (similar to archetypes) latent within the students, while overlooking their faults. Their deficiencies usually fade away over time if they are not given any attention. (See de Vitray-Meyerovitch, 1977, pp. 91-99, for further elaboration.)

THE RETREAT PROCESS

Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, head of the Sufi Order International, has developed an elaborate alchemical retreat process with seven stages which is an adaptation of the traditional Sufi retreat transformation process. These retreats are given both in groups and individually. The retreat has long been a Sufi tradition, and provides intense experiences which often cause remarkable permanent change in the consciousness of the student. One is faced with the death of one's self-identity, which can be a frightening prospect. The retreat is a great strain on the system, and is not done unless the teacher permits. Group and individual meditation processes are also part of The Sufi Order program

The Sufi Order retreats involve doing practices given by the teacher in a program lasting from early morning through evening, with times to eat and rest. They include concentrating and chanting sacred phrases (often the names of God in Arabic, called *dhikr*, or phrases (*mantras*) from other religious traditions, prayers, focus on practices to evoke inner light, identifying with the qualities of masters, saints and prophets and angelic planes, breath practices, visualizations, and listening to audio cassettes (especially those of Pir Vilayat, made when he was conducting a retreat), and finally ending with practices to return from these altered states of consciousness into the world again.

The retreat guide visits the retreatant each day, to give new practices, and may sit with them to observe their progress. The whole retreat is often done in silence. Individual retreats may be adapted to the differing intentions and needs of the retreatant. Generally there are vegetarian meals. The Sufi Order retreats may last from one to forty days. The shorter number of days are done in the early stages of the path. The retreat guides receive permission to conduct retreats after completing specialized training from the Sufi Order.

Pir Vilayat did four 40-day retreats, while fasting, during his traditional training, before he became head of the Order. After those very difficult experiences, he decided to present a retreat format which was more adapted to American and European mentality and life-style, as most of the students in the Sufi Order International are from the West, few are Muslims, are working, and are from many religions. This has made retreats accessible to a large number of students. (There are about 125 Sufi Order centers in the U.S. and Canada, and more in Europe and Japan.)

The traditional retreats of other (mostly Muslim) Sufi groups may be done fasting, may also last 40 days, and also create profound personality changes. They emphasize a process of saying prayers and constantly repeating the names of God for many hours a day. Most retreats are done in places of peace and security, such as a cave, quiet retreat hut, or an isolated room. (For an example of a traditional Islamic-

based retreat, see Michaela Ozelsel (1996), who published a diary of her 40-day retreat. She analyzes the process at the end of her book.)

In the East, the typical student expects to study twelve years before the transformation process is achieved. Few students to the end of the process, as their life's attachments and problems cause them to stop studying. And, of course, each person is limited by their innate capacities, dedication and maturity as to the level they can reach. The most important influence upon the student is their relationship with the teacher. This is a powerful relationship of the heart, not the intellect. Similar to other spiritual traditions, the presence of the magnetism (*baraka*) and viewpoint of the teacher creates changes in the body, mind and consciousness of the students. The energy of the group is also influential. Some of the practices trigger off intense kundalini energy, or awareness of internal planes of light. The process may become very uncomfortable, and the student must use mastery and self-discipline to finish it. (The Sufi retreat could be compared to a Native American sweat lodge, where the heat is so intense that one feels they will die. In both situations, the outcome is worth the difficulties.) Several interesting accounts of this process are found in Feild (1976) and Tweedy (1986).

The last level, the complete *nafs*, or the integrated human being (*insan-i-kamil*) , is most usually realized by one human being in the world at a time, the Logos, or *qutub* , God's representative to humanity. The Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) is considered to have reached this level. Realized teachers have some of the following attributes: great insight and wisdom, they reflect everything which is in the heart of others, exemplify the oneness of existence (become like a mirror reflecting the bright light of God), represent the ultimate in human evolution, integration and existential communion, and have died to the conventional self. They are able to transcend time, space and place, traveling on the inner planes. They live a modest, humble, and hidden life, not claiming any virtue, renunciation or sainthood. They may perform miracles, but as privately as possible. They have a calmness, serenity and oneness with all aspects of life. They exude sereneness and tranquility, and seem to glow with a special light. (Humility is encouraged in Sufism, so many of these people are unknown to the world outside of their sphere of influence.) Some of these qualities are found in Sufi teachers who are not at the *qutub* stage. (Sufism, and Islam, do not believe in the possibility of a human to be a God, as in a messiah or avatar. The transcendent aspect of God is considered to be beyond all creation.) The state of Unity with God involves the annihilation of the human being. In Sufism, this means the body of the person becomes the conduit through which God speaks, hears, acts, and perceives himself in creation. God is considered the Divine Beloved, in whom the person passes away. This is impossible to describe in words. Poetry attempts to capture the essence of the experience.

For example, the Sufi Poet, Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-1273 A.D.), founder of the Mevlevi dervish order in Konya, Turkey, says:

A million galaxies are a little foam on that shoreless sea.
We came whirling out of nothing, scattering stars like dust.
The stars made a circle and in the middle we dance,
Turning and turning, it sunders all attachment.
Every atom turns, bewildered,
And it is only God circling himself.

Rabi'a al Adawwiya (717-801 A.D.) (Upton, 1988,p.45) brought the concept of the love of God into Sufism. Her total concentration on God is reflected in her poem:

O God,
Give the goods of this world to your enemies--
Give the treasures of Paradise to your friends--
But as for me--You are all I need.
O God!
If I adore You out of fear of Hell, burn me in Hell!
If I adore You out of desire for Paradise,
Lock me out of Paradise.
But if I adore You for Yourself alone,
Do not deny to me Your eternal beauty.

We can see that these are very poetic outpourings to express the goal of attaining the state of the unlimited Self. The Sufis are famous for their poets, as poetry can express ideas beyond linear thought. For example, Hazrat Inayat Khan, who brought Sufism to the West in 1910, says in a poem to God as his Beloved (1978, p.104):

Enter unhesitatingly, Beloved,
For in this abode there is naught but my longing for Thee.
Do I call Thee my soul? But Thou art my spirit.
Can I call Thee my life? But Thou livest forever.
May I call Thee my Beloved? But Thou art Love itself.
Then what must I call Thee? I must call Thee myself.

The same expression is found in the beautiful *Upanishads*, the Hindu scripture, composed between 400 and 800 A.D. (1965, pp. 95-96):

> May God who is hidden in nature, even as the silkworm is hidden in the web of silk he made lead us to union with his own Spirit, with Brahman.
>
> He is God, hidden in all beings, their inmost soul who is in all. He watches the works of creation, lives in all things, watches all things. He is pure consciousness, beyond the three conditions of nature, the ONE who rules the work of silence of many, the ONE who transforms one seed into many.

> Only those who see God in their soul attain the joy eternal. . . He is the wandering swan everlasting, the soul of all in the universe, the Spirit of fire in the ocean of life. To know him is to overcome death, and he is the only Path to life eternal. If ever for man it were possible to fold the tent of the sky, in that day he might be able to end his sorrow without the help of God.

This has been a little taste of the complex Sufi process of personality transformation beyond ego states. It demonstrates that our Western ideas of ego states were preceeded by much older spiritual systems which are even more comprehensive, and which are only now starting to influence the way we look at human development. The Sufis seek to provide experiences which cause their students to go beyond what Western psychology attempts to reach. They aim to create people who are more than just able to deal with everyday life. They wish to cause the caterpillar of the ego-limited self to transform into the moth who dives into the flame of Divine Unity, and then brings back that reborn self into the world, aiming to be of service. Those who complete the process bring love, harmony, and beauty as the essence of themselves, and are a blessing and a healing to those whose life they touch.

CONCLUSION

A process of "dying before death" is found in many spiritual paths. The ancient Sufi orders have developed an elaborate system for transformation of their students, an evolution to levels of consciousness beyond the ego states found in Western psychology.

This paper gives the academic side of my presentation for the conference. The experiential part is presented in an audio cassette of my talk on this subject at the 1997 Annual ARPR Conference, which can be ordered through ARPR. The talk focuses on a series of paintings and sculptures I have made over the past 24 years as a diary of my spiritual journey as a student, retreat guide, and teacher in the Sufi Order International, and in studies with Native American teachers. Unfortunately, the cost of printing, and lack of space, prevented their publication here. I hope to include them in a book in the future.

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THE ACADEMY OF RELIGION AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH
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THE MANAGEMENT OF STRESS IN THIS LIFE AS A PREPARATION FOR THE AFTERLIFE

Donald R. Morse

First, stress is defined and its management in this life is examined. Second, the afterlife is considered. Third, stress and the afterlife are evaluated in terms of whether the individual is an atheist, agnostic or religionist. Fourth, commonalities between NDEs and related parapsychological phenomena and certain religions are examined. Following this, stress prevention and control implications are considered. Finally, the use of stress management techniques in certain religions are evaluated.

Stress

The stress concept has three components: (1) stressors; (2) individual make-up; and (3) stress responses (Morse 1998a).

Stressors are the potential etiological agents of stress. They are: Physical; Sociological (Social); and Psychological. Stressors can occur by themselves or combined. If a stressor occurs once and lasts for a relatively short time, it is known as an *acute stressor*. If acute stressors are repeated over a given period of time with breaks in between, they are known as *chronic intermittent stressors*. If the stressors continue unabated, they are called *chronic stressors*.

Physical Stressors are external agents such as: chemicals, drugs, noise, trauma, radiation, monotony, temperature, humidity, foul odors and bitter taste. Although physical stressors are potentially damaging, being environmentally determined, once ascertained, they are usually avoidable.

Sociological(Social, Life) Stressors (Life Stress Events) are unplanned, unforseen and usually unavoidable environmental events that directly affect the involved individual. They are the most debilitating and devastating of the three kinds of stressors. Examples are: death of a loved one; loss of a job; divorce; prison sentence; a church fire; and retirement.

Psychological Stressors (Strong, Usually Negative Emotions) are usually self-induced and include anger, rage, resentment, disgust, hate, hostility, fear, anxiety, worry, panic, jealousy, envy, shame, guilt, frustration, sadness and self-pity. They are damaging because they are frequently repetitive and cumulative and can become self-perpetuating. Psychological stressors can set up other psychological stressors. This elicits unremitting stress, which, in turn can lead to stress-related diseases, such as tension headache, hypertension, and heart attacks. Anger, frustration, fear and anxiety are four particularly dangerous psychological stressors.

Individual makeup is the second component of stress. The type of stress response that occurs depends upon individual makeup, which is determined by genetic and environmental factors. The genetic factors include: (1) gender; (2) ethnic origin and race; (3) religion (unless converted); (4) age; (5) height and weight (partly environmental); (6) personality type (partly environmental); (7) traits and attitudes (partly environmental); (8) emotional stability (partly environmental); and (8) sexuality (partly environmental); The environmental factors include: (1) diet; (2) drug and nutrient intake; (3) exercise frequency and type; (4) occupation; (5) hobbies; (6) culture; (7) use of relaxation techniques; (8) presence and kind of systemic disease; and (9) home and job location.

The stress responses are the third component of stress. The extent of the response ultimately depends upon the following: (1) the threat (severity of the stressor); (2) whether it is expected or unexpected; (3) evaluation of it (personally threatening? controllable?); (4)

available resources to deal with the threat (e.g., physical strength, speed, endurance, mental stability, ability to relax, resourcefulness, presence or absence of disease); (5) current mood (anxious or depressed mood worsens the stress responses); and (4) kind of reaction chosen (cautious approach, flight, defense-attack, freeze-submission, ignore the threat, consider the threat as a challenge).

The stress responses are a combination of physiological-biochemical, physical and psychological reactions, and result primarily from the activity of two major systems: (1) the H-AP-AC axis, with the release of cortisone; and (2) the sympathetic division of the ANS and the adrenal medulla, with the release of epinephrine (adrenaline) and norepinephrine (noradrenaline).

The most severe stress responses are known as **distress (bad, negative, or unhealthy stress)**. They result from stressors that the individual perceives as threatening, dangerous, disturbing, frightening or deleterious. Distress is harmful only when it is overwhelming or occurs repeatedly. The raison d'etre of distress is to deal with emergency situations. The body mobilizes resources (e.g., oxygen, glucose) that are rapidly transported to the large muscles of the arms, legs and jaws. This allows for rapid and efficient management of the emergency by either fighting, biting or fleeing. All systems that could interfere with the effectiveness of the stress responses are turned off. This includes the gastrointestinal system, the genito-urinary system and the immunological-inflammatory systems.

Knowing When You're Under Stress

Just as people differ in their responsiveness to stressors, so, too, do they differ in their types of stress reactions. Some individuals sweat profusely, some react with a beet-red face, while others become pale as a ghost. Some people shake and shiver, some develop a pounding in the chest, while others have a sinking feeling in the stomach. Some react with abdominal cramping; others become nauseous. Some have quivering speech; others show stammering or even complete speech loss (Morse 1998a).

The Results of Stress

Occasional activation of distress is beneficial and necessary when an emergency is present. However, when distress is repeatedly turned on, and the threat of danger is illusory, major problems can result. Continually elevating the blood pressure, raising the heart rate, closing down gastrointestinal tract activity, and contracting muscles can lead to stress-related diseases and disorders such as hypertension, heart attacks, strokes, ulcers, tension headache, bruxism, temporomandibular-joint disorders disorders, premature death, burnout and accidents (Morse 1998a).

Stress Management

The Negative Coping Methods

The negative coping methods include excessive alcohol, caffeine, and other drug intake, smoking, improper habits, the gambling methods, excess shopping (shopaholic), excess working (workaholic) and the defensive psychological methods (e.g., rationalization, denial). They should all be avoided (Morse 1998a).

The Positive Psychological Methods

These include avoidance, evasion, goal selection, solo coping, consultations and deep relaxation techniques. With the use of deep relaxation techniques such as hypnosis, meditation and brain wave synchronizer goggles, the relaxation response is elicited (opposite to the usual stress response). It is the body's way of "discharging excessive steam." The stress hormones (epinephrine, norepinephrine, cortisone) are "turned off" and the relaxation hormone, acetylcholine, is "turned on." The major physiological findings are: 1) decreased blood pressure (especially after several months of continual use); 2) reduced heart rate; 3) decreased breathing rate, intake of oxygen, and release of carbon dioxide; 4) increased muscular relaxation; and 5)increased watery, high-amylase saliva. Subjectively, individuals report sensations such as warmth, tingling, floating, lightness, drowsiness and euphoria.

Continual practice of deep relaxation can lead to: 1) reduced blood pressure for

hypertensives; 2) decreased heart arrhythmias; 3) reduced aggression; 4) improved psychological health, 5) decreased anxiety; 6) improved interpersonal relationships; 7) improved work and study habits; and 8) becoming close to God or nirvana (Morse 1998a).

The Positive Physical Methods

These include exercise, crying, laughing, primal scream therapy, whistling and singing, hot and cold and massage (Morse 1998a).

The Positive Nutritional Methods

It is necessary that the brain and the rest of the body be optimally supplied with nutrients and oxygen. These include vitamins C, B complex, bioflavonoids, E, A, D, minerals, proteins, carbohydrates, fats, lecithin and water (Morse 1998).

The Positive Diversionary Methods

Continually doing the same thing can be self-destructive. Various ways to escape can be divided into daily diversions, variety and vacations (Morse 1998a).

The Afterlife

There is no universal concept of the afterlife. It varies among religions, organizations and individuals. For atheists (about one billion people), no afterlife exists. For agnostics, the afterlife might or might not exist. They tend to look for scientific proof before they commit themselves. For agnostics, NDEs, OBEs, past life regressions, medium reports and mirror apparitions might have some influence in their decision making. For most monotheistic religionists, the afterlife journey is a voyage of the soul to either God in heaven, the devil in hell, or some temporary purging area. Nevertheless in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, different pathways are required to reach either heaven, hell or purgatory (or its variant). In Hinduism, Buddhism and some other eastern religions, the concept is that there is no single afterlife, but rather a series of incarnations and reincarnations taken by the departing spirit.

Stress and the Afterlife

Atheists

For atheists, stress management in this life would have no effect on the nonexistent afterlife. They consider that before birth, there was nothingness. After death, they will also be nothingness. Nothingness is absolutely nothing. Hence, there should be nothing to fear. Atheists' stress and stress management are, therefore, related to their actions, thoughts and feelings while alive.

Agnostics

For agnostics, a dual problem exists. If there is an afterlife, and they do not manage stress virtuously and morally, they probably will wind up in hell, purgatory (or some similar region) or be subjected to repeated reincarnations. If there is an afterlife, and they manage stress virtuously and morally, they probably will end up in heaven or a similar realm. In contrast, if there isn't an afterlife, managing stress virtuously and morally can gain them the admiration of family, friends and others, but they might miss out on a lot of enjoyable things in this life. If they managed stress nonvirtuously and immorally, they'd lose respect and admiration and might wind up in jail. However, they might have derived sensuous pleasures that people who managed stress virtuously and morally would have lost out on.

Religionists

For religionists, faith tells them that there is an afterlife. Hence, they would want to manage stress virtuously and morally in this life to help ensure a positive afterlife. To help the agnostics and religionists and possibly give the atheists some food for thought, the following evidence for the presence of an afterlife is presented.

In most of these religions, God is considered as a celestial being of light, who is compassionate, forgiving, and stresses love and learning. (The light, love, and learning are emphasized in most NDEs and related phenomena). In Zoroastrianism, the departing soul come to the *Chinvat Bridge* (a point of no return as seen in many NDEs). In Buddhism's "Tibetan Book of the Dead," the Clear Light is the Ultimate Reality. In Strict Christianity, God is enveloped in light and the emphasis is on love. Islam is considered to be the Light that Allah sent to everyone through His final messenger, Allah, who is the True symbol of love, external and internal knowledge and mercy. Sufism considers that each of us are beings endowed with the Divine Light. In Kabbalah (mystical Judaism), the dying person passes through the *Cave of Makhpelah* (a tunnel that is seen in most NDEs and related phenomena), is blessed with a vision of *Shekhinah* (the female essence of God), who appears as a formless, radiant image of light. When the unified soul sees the Shekhinah, it goes in joy and love to meet Her. *Ruah* (the second level of the soul) catapults out of the physical body (as occurs with many NDEs), and becomes enveloped by a separate field of light ("a transparent body"). In *Upper Gan Eden* (the realm of heavenly delights), the light is brilliant. The soul enters the "River of Light." In addition, there are meetings with loved ones and a life review. All of these aspects are seen in NDEs, and some OBEs, past life regressions, apparitions, visions, séances and medium reports. Most of the following NDE features have also been found with the aforementioned religions: (1) separation from the physical body, followed by a floating upward to an elevated position; (2) spiritual body appears to pass through a narrow passageway (frequently described as a dark tunnel, void or portal); (3) generally after passing through the tunnel, a bright white or golden light is seen at the end; (4) as the spiritual body enters this light, any pain is lost and feelings occur of comfort, joy, peace and indescribable love; (5) within this light, vigorously alive-appearing deceased relatives, loved ones or friends are met; (6) the spiritual body then arrives at a body, wall, fence, body of water or limit that appears to demarcate ordinary life from a realm that lies beyond one's perceived notion of life (sensed as a point of no return); (7) the spiritual body then becomes aware of a luminous God-like presence, who varies with the religious or non-religious upbringing of the person (e.g., God, Jesus, Allah, Buddha, a glowing, friendly entity); (8) this God-like presence conducts the spiritual body through an extraordinary, panoramic, rapid life review. A major lesson learned from this is that the most important things in life are love, giving and knowledge (Morse 1998b).

Negative NDEs. It was found by Moody (1975) and Rawlings (1978), and one of my cases, that people who had attempted suicide and had NDEs did not report the aforementioned pleasant feelings and sensations. They found the experiences to be decidedly unpleasant. Nevertheless, not all people who attempted suicide had nightmarish experiences. Cox-Chapman (1995) found that some individuals had experiences that were partly frightening and partly pleasant while others had more typical NDEs. Lawrence (1997) found some people with negative NDEs experienced a void — a feeling of nothingness. Others felt themselves being dragged down into a pit with demon-like figures (similar to the hellish descriptions of some of the aforementioned religions). These experiences were very rare, but Lawrence did not find a correlation between evil people and negative NDEs. Greyson and Bush (1992) have found negative NDEs in three categories: similar to regular NDEs but interpreted as unpleasant; a sense of nonexistence or eternal void; and graphic hellish landscapes and entities. Atwater (1994) also found that dark images are not ways frigtening.

Conclusions. One definite finding from the reported NDEs, is that people can have a pleasant afterlife regardless of their religious affiliation. Agnostics, atheists, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and good people of various other faiths all had pleasant afterlife experiences. This is a blow to fundamentalists of all religions who ascribe to the belief that there is only one path to salvation. Some of them go so far as to say that the pleasant NDE is the work of Satan (Moody 1997). Nevertheless, most religious leaders do not ascribe to the belief that there is only way way or one group of people who will attain a pleasant afterlife.

As has been shown in the discussion of religious concepts of the afterlife, love and

bliss are emphasized in the heavenly existence, God is portrayed as a being of bright light, and in Kabbalah, the soul meets loved ones and receives a life review. These have all been found in most NDEs.

Past Life Regressions

Whether people actually relive past lives (reincarnations) is debatable, but many similarities occur between religious descriptions, the descriptions of NDEs and past-life regressions. For example with Weiss' patient, Catherine, between incarnations, she floated in and out of her body and became aware of a bright, wonderful light (Weiss 1988). Catherine saw other friendly beings who helped her in her journey. She felt peaceful, serene and comfortable. Catherine met heavenly spirits who stressed the importance of love and learning. Psychiatrists Whitton (1986), Weiss (1992, 1996), and Moody (1991) reported similar findings and others such as: passing through a dark tunnel, seeing deceased loved ones, and observing a heavenly scene.

Out-of-Body Experiences (OBEs)

OBEs, as described previously, can occur as part of the NDEs. However, they can also occur while under general anesthesia, during deep meditation, from the use of specific audio tapes, during dreams, and spontaneously (Moody 1988, 1993; Morse 1994; Guggenheim and Guggenheim 1996). Being subjective experiences, they are difficult to prove. However, indirect proof is possible. From the research of Monroe (1994), Moody (1988, 1993), the Guggenheims (1996) and Morse (1994), many of the components of the OBE have found to be similar to those of the NDE. These include: floating, a tunnel, a bright light, blissful feelings, contact with deceased loved ones, and encountering a celestial being.

Apparitions, Visions, Dreams, Séances and Medium Reports

Apparitions and Visions. Many healthcare professionals and scientists consider that apparitions and visions are hallucinations and have no relationship to any real occurrence. Nevertheless the Guggenheims (1996) investigated 2,000 people who had an after-death contact (ADC). An ADC is a direct one-on-one experience of a spiritual communication between a deceased family member or friend and an individual. It is initiated by the deceased and occurs spontaneously. One of the most frequent types is the visual ADC. Investigations of these ADC visions have shown that the vast majority of the individuals involved have good physical and mental health (e.g., no evidence of fevers, dementia, schizophrenia, depression) and are not taking drugs or alcoholic beverages.

Moody (1993) investigated apparitions of the deceased and means of communicating with their love ones. He used the ancient Greek technique of mirror gazing based on a psychomanteum (an apparition chamber in which a mirror is used in order to bring forth visions of the dead). Moody found that many individuals received life-like visions of deceased loved ones and some encountered angelic beings. Arcangel (1997) corroborated Moody's findings. She found that of the 68 participants in her study, 85 percent encountered apparitions of departed loved ones.

Dreams. The Guggenheims (1996), Morse (1994) and Weiss (1992, 1996) have done extensive investigations of after-death contact dreams. Many describe vivid dream visions of departed loved ones or friends, celestial beings, heaven and occasionally, of hell.

Séances and Medium Reports. A medium is needed to induce the presence (either visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory or some combination) of the deceased. Currently with the development of ethical mediums, the interest in mediumship has resurfaced (Crowley, 1988; Van Praagh, 1997). Some believe that mediums contact deceased individuals and celestial beings. James Van Praagh, while in an alert, but altered state of consciousness, was apparently able to talk to individuals via the telephone, get the caller's and deceased's name, and give details about the deceased that would only be known by the living relative caller. Concerning spirits, he revealed they: (1) have spiritual bodies and do things similarly to those of real life, except they don't eat and perform other bodily functions; (2) develop mentally but don't age physically; (3)contact the living in dreams; (4)go to various "heavenly realms;" (5)contact God who is everywhere; and (6) reincarnate but only after

about 200 earth years. He also found "heaven" to be infused with light, peace and love.

Conclusions About Apparitions, Visions, Dreams, Séances and Medium Reports. Apparitions and visions can occur either spontaneously, through hypnosis, meditation and visualization techniques, with the aid of mirror gazing, in dreams and with the help of mediums. Many phenomena reported with these occurrences are similar to those found with NDEs, OBEs, during past life regressions and with the previously discussed religions. There-fore, it appears that there is an underlying reality in all of them supportive of the possibility of God and an afterlife.

Stress Prevention and Control Implications

From NDEs, OBEs, past life regressions, apparitions, visions, dreams, séances and medium reports, it appears that if people lead a relatively good life, they can have a heavenly afterlife (if one exists). If one attempts suicide, the afterlife voyage is more likely to be stressful. From the cases of criminals or evil people who reported NDEs, it appears that the afterlife journey would most likely be hellish. Hence, if people aspire to a heavenly afterlife, they should live a righteous and moral life. However, some have claimed that the blissful heaven would be so boring that it would be hell itself. Nevertheless, from the assertions of almost all of those who have had a NDE, at least the first stages of the afterlife are described as indescribably joyful and euphoric (Morse 1998b).

From NDE and other parapsychological evidence, it is imposs-ible to tell if one can change fate by making righteous and moral decisions both in this life and the afterlife. However, because is not knowable whether repentance is possible in the afterlife, it is more prudent to act morally and righteously here and now.

Relative to stress and its afterlife implications:

1. One shouldn't become anxious about whether or not an afterlife exists, but act on the assumption that it does.
2. One shouldn't get angry or hateful because overuse of these psychological stressors prevent oneself from being a righteous and moral person. Rather one should act rationally and in a calm, cool, and collected manner when facing a stressful situation in order to prevent committing immoral and evil acts.
3. One definite finding from NDEs is that most people can have a pleasant afterlife. However, from some of the religious concepts discussed next, it appears possible to alter one's afterlife fate by making positive changes.

The Use of Stress Management Techniques in Certain Religions

Certain religions have a belief in the possibility of intervention both during life and in the afterlife in order to change one's ultimate fate. These religious concepts are now examined.

Hinduism states that if a person: had led a good life; acted well in stressful situations; and is blissful at the time of death; his/her spirit-soul would leave the physical body, discard the subtle body, and be liberated from the cycle of rebirth (Jurji 1959a). The liberation is known as *moksha.* With moksha, two viewpoints exist: (1) the spirit-soul is absorbed into the all (we are all God), and this is bliss (the union, however is temporary, and the process of rebirth starts again); and (2) the spirit-soul (with its spiritual body) goes into the spirit sky (equivalent of heaven) to be with God forever; the person's individuality remains, he/she is united in love with God, and never returns to the cycle of rebirth (the predominant viewpoint). If a person did not lead a good life, or had unpleasant thoughts at the time of death, he/she is in the need of further purification. The spirit-soul takes the subtle body and enters another body to be reborn. It can take several reincarnations to end the cycles of birth-death-reincarnation. The lessons here are: (1) lead a righteous life; (2) act well when dealing with stressful situations; (3) meditate as you are dying to be in a blissful state; and (4) learn from your mistakes in this life or you will have to learn throughout many lives.

Zoroastrianism states that if one's earthly good deeds outweigh the bad deeds, then the *daena* (guide) appears as a beautiful maiden (Kraus, 1959). The maiden leads the soul across the bridge to "the best existence" (equivalent of heaven). If one's earthly bad deeds

outweigh the good deeds, the daena appears as a very ugly maiden. The maiden leads the soul across the bridge to "the worst existence" (equivalent of hell). If one's earthly deeds are balanced between good and bad, then a neutral daena leads the soul to a temporary neutral abode known as *Hamistagan* (equivalent of purgatory). Neither much pain or happiness is found there. The holier is a soul,the better its place in the "astral world." Those who led a good life and had not been overly stressed would have an excellent chance of being in "the best existence."

Buddhism. In the "Tibetan Book of the Dead," the soul is given means to attain liberation from the endless "Wheel of Death and Rebirth" (Chan 1959). Liberation is when the person's own mind and self is identical with the Clear Light, which implies that the person Is the Ultimate Reality, "the All-Good Buddha," who transcends time, eternity and all creation. With Liberation, the person remains in the Clear Light forever. It is within the *Bardo* (intermediate states between one incarnation and the next) that the soul can either become liberated or remain in the recurrent cycle of birth, death and reincarnation. Hence, a soul can gain eternal bliss by becoming unselfish, non-egotistical, and having love and compassion for all sentient things. If one led a good life and learned by stress management methods (e.g., psychological counseling, meditation, hypnosis) how to overcome hate, anger, rage, fear and frustration, he/she will be more likely to attain Liberation than one not so well prepared. If a soul doesn't achieve Liberation in the first bardo, it has to go on to the second bardo and try again. In the second part of the second bardo, if the soul responds to the dazzling white light of the second God with pure joy, it will be liberated. However, if the soul reacts with anger from having indulged in this emotion while on Earth, the soul will recoil from the light in fear and be drawn into hell. In the third bardo, the soul has other opportunities to enter Liberation if it can control its emotions such as jealousy and fear. If not, it will enter the cycle of continual reincarnations. The lesson here is that if one has led a good life, learned to control stressful emotions (especially anger, fear and jealousy) with the emphasis on meditation techniques, one can help reach the highest state of bliss by using these learned stress management techniques in the bardo states of the afterlife.

Judaism. In Kabbalah (mystical Judaism, with the most detailed afterlife path), the soul is unified, but it has three levels for most people and two higher ones for a few chosen people (Raphael 1996). The dying person sees *Shekhinah* (the female essence of God), who appears as a formless, radiant image. When the unified soul sees the Shekhinah, it goes out in joy and love to meet Her. If the person had been righteous during life, he/she attaches to Her. If the person was not righteous, the unified soul is left behind and mourns for its separation from the body. The Angel of Death also makes an appearance to the dying person. If the person had led a virtuous life, then the unified soul cannot be harmed by the Angel of Death. If not, then the unified soul is subjected to punishment. *Nefesh*, which originates at birth, is the lowest level of the soul. It is the vital energy of the physical body. At death, it remains closely attached to the physical body and experiences the "pangs of the grave" over a 3-to-7 day period. Nefesh remains with the dying body. *Ruah*, the second level of the soul, is the emotional aspect. The parting of Ruah from the physical body is painful and emotional. *Dumah*, the guardian of the dead, appears to the departing Ruah and asks its name. If the soul remembers its name, this minimizes its struggle to leave the body. Once Ruah departs the body, it becomes enveloped by a separate field of light known as a "transparent body." Only the righteous receive such a celestial garment. The wicked souls go naked to their fate. Ruah next goes to the 12-month purgations of *Gehenna* (similar to hell and purgatory). If people were righteous during life, they wear the celestial garment and do not suffer the torments of Gehenna. The severity of the purgation depends upon the person's lifestyle; the more wicked, the more severe the punishment. Wicked people who never repent can remain in Gehenna forever. In essence,purgation functions for abreaction, discharge and catharsis. It allows for purification and progres-sive resolution of painful, incomplete emotions (similar to prolonged, intensive psychotherapy). Hence,if one led a relatively good life and dealt positively with negative emotions such as hate, anger, anxiety, fear and frustrations, very little punish-ment would occur in Gehenna. However, even if one didn't lead a relatively good life, but had learned how to deal with these negative emotions,opportunity exists to resolve them in the after-life at Gehenna and still be able to have a blissful afterlife, as is

now shown. The next stop for Ruah is *Lower Gan Eden*, which is considered to be the earthly Garden of Eden. It is here that purification and preparation for entry into *Upper Gan Eden* occurs. When all is completed, Ruah is transported to Upper Gan Eden. If one was righteous during life, at death, *Neshamah* directly enters the sublime regions of Upper Gan Eden, which is the realm of heavenly delights. In Upper Gan Eden, the light is brilliant. Immersion in the divine light serves to further purify the soul of any lingering psychic recollections of Earthly existence. The soul then enters the "River of Light," becomes completely purified, and is ready to come before the Master of the Universe. The few truly enlightened people have *Hayyah and Yehidah* linked, which enter the "Bundle of Life" ("Storehouse of Souls," divine region where souls are stored). The other souls (Ruah, Neshamah), which had gone through the other realms and reached Upper Gan Eden thoroughly purified, now enter the Bundle of Life. This is where the souls are given their assignment for subsequent incarnations. Reincarnation (*gilgul*)is for the purpose of restitution for wrong-doings of a former life and to attain further perfection. However, only souls those that had some imperfections remaining get rein-carnated. At the end-of-days, a resurrection of the dead occurs. The lesson is, as with the other religions discussed so far, a virtuous person would have the best opportunity to reach a bliss-ful afterlife. If the person had learned how to control his/ her negative emotions (e.g., anger, hate, jealousy, fear) by positive stress management techniques (e.g. meditation, psychological counseling), the need for emotional purging in the afterlife would be greatly reduced, if not eliminated. Also, one who had previous stress management training would have a shorter and less painful postmortem and would have a better chance to avoid reincarnations.

Christianity. Within each branch of Christianity, the more strict interpretation (as with the Fundamentalists or "Born Again" Christians) is that even though Jesus Christ died for everyone, only those who accept him as the saviour will go to heaven (Johnson, 1959). All others will go to eternal hell. At the end-of-days, only those who accept Jesus Christ as the saviour will be resurrected. In contrast, the less strict viewpoint is that righteous people, regardless of their beliefs, will have the opportunity to be saved and resurrected. Here, the strict Christian concept of purgatory (somewhat similar to the Jewish Gehenna) allows for purging of one's sins which would be followed by salvation. As far as strict Christianity is concerned, being a righteous person and controlling anger, hate, jealousy, fear and other negative emotions will still not prevent one from going to hell as long as Jesus Christ is not accepted as the saviour. The only way to go to heaven is to accept Jesus. However with the less strict viewpoint, one can go to figurative heaven by being a righteous person, which would include controlling negative emotions such as anger and hate.

Islam. As far as the afterlife is concerned, Islam has been a religion of reward and punishment (Jurji, 1959b). The life to come (*Al-Aakhira*)) is completely shaped by one's present life. Similar to orthodox Judaism and strict Christianity, Islam believes in a Day of Reckoning during which the righteous shall be rewarded in paradise, and the wicked shall go to a severe and eternal fire in hell. Nevertheless, as with Judaism and less strict Christianity, there are ways to avoid eternal damnation. Comparable to Gehenna (of Judaism) and purgatory (of strict Christianity), the Qur'an (holy book of Islam) speaks of an intermediary realm between paradise and hell where those who were halfway between good and evil in their Earthly lives will go for a time. Those who were believers in God but whose balance of evil deeds outweighed their good deeds will only experience hell for a period of time. God can and will forgive those who repent during this time. Here, too, a righteous God-believing person who controlled anger, hate, jealousy and other negative emotions can go to paradise. There is also a second chance for those whose life did not meet up to standards. The person could repent while in the intermediary realm and still go on to paradise. Hence, one should learn stress control techniques while alive so they can be used in the afterlife, if needed.

Sufism. In the afterlife concept, one's actions during life will determine what is to be expected in the grave (Jurji 1959c). A difference from traditional Islam is that people judge themselves and send themselves either to paradise or hell. For example, if a person dies angry, he/she will go to hell. Here is a clearcut reason to be a righteous person and especially to learn stress control measures (e.g., meditation, psychologic counseling) to

deal with negative emotions such as anger and hate.

Sikhism. The immortal soul leaves the body, and its fate depends upon the type of life the person had led (Archer, 1959). A moral and righteous person has no fear of death because it gives him/her the opportunity to merge with the Almighty. The wicked person dreads death because it leads to the unending cycle of death and reincarnation (*metempsychosis*). After death, the soul goes to its next birth according to what it deserves. If one had been wicked, the soul is reborn in a lower animal species. If one had performed some good deeds, the soul will be reborn in a good family. However, the cycle of death and rebirth keeps the soul away from Divinity. The soul can only merge with God, if one had led a moral and righteous life. To end the cycle of death and rebirth, the virtuous person has to meditate on the "Name" and receive divine grace. Hell is not a literal place; rather it is a reincarnation into a lower species. This means that the soul will be out of God's presence. A figurative intermediate realm is rebirth into a good family. However, to achieve a figurative heaven, one has to be a virtuous person who practices repentance, prayer and love, and meditates on the "Name." In that way, metempsychosis would not occur and the soul would become one with God. Hence it appears for Sikhs, in order to ensure a heavenly existence, one has to live a righteous life and practice the major stress management technique of meditation.

Commonality. With regard to the religions discussed here, what they have in common in their more formal approach is now examined. Generally God judges us all, but repentance can save us from a bitter outcome. What one does on Earth determines, his/her future in the afterlife. A good life leads to heaven, which is taken literally or figuratively; a bad life leads to hell, also taken literally or figuratively. In most of these religions, there is an intermediate stopping off place (again taken literally or figuratively) for those whose lives were between good and bad. And if those souls repent or eliminate their negative emotions (purging and purification), they have the opportunity to go to heaven. For most of these religions, a concept of reincarnation exists (or existed somewhere in their development, as with Gnostic Christianity). However, along with the concept of reincarnation is the generally held belief that righteous souls do not go through reincarnation but can attain the Divine presence directly. For most of these religions, a oneness with God can be attained through prayer, contemplation and meditation (all excellent stress management techniques).

Hence, there is evidence to show that stress management techniques (e.g., meditation, hypnosis and psychologic counseling) to overcome negative emotions such as anger, hate, jealousy, guilt, fear and anxiety, would prove helpful in making a person live a righteous life. This, in turn, could improve chances to have a blissful afterlife, and in some instances, allow for overcoming negative emotions even in the afterlife.

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THE USE AND VALUE OF PSI IN PARISH MINISTRY

Louis Richard Batzler

Dying, death and life after death are major concerns of all religions. Parapsychology also deals with these concerns. However, there has been relatively little interaction or cooperation between religion and parapsychology regarding these mutual concerns. This study intends to show the value and validity of psychical research and related paranormal experiences for religion -- specifically the Christian religion as expressed through aspects of parish ministry in which psi has been and can be used to foster faith, understanding and comfort for parishioners who are confronting dying, death, grief and the afterlife.

Introduction

Whenever we consider the meaning of life, we have to deal with the event that sets radical limits to self-development in this world. This event is death and it is the fact of our death in the future that greatly influences the meaning of our life in the present. Beliefs about death and life after death serve as important organizing principles in determining how we conduct our lives. However, beliefs alone are not enough. We must witness to these beliefs bodily and daily. If we merely consider life after death possible, reasonable or justifiable without living it now, without progressing toward this future life in a way that changes us and our world for the better, then we have already buried that belief.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how psychical research and paranormal experiences (hereafter referred to as psi) can be useful in the Christian church for better understanding of dying, death, life after death and grief, and for more effective coping with these issues. Hopefully, this will motivate and encourage professionals and laity within the religious community to utilize psi in their work and life.

One of the major responsibilities of religion is to enable persons to live meaningful and fruitful lives. The parish is a primary vehicle for carrying out this responsibility, and one of the most important ways it does this is through its ministry that concerns death and the afterlife. These concerns appear at various times and ways in worship, funerals, scripture, Christian education and pastoral counseling.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the Christian religion and is the basis for all statements of faith. Without it there would be no New Testament, no church and no Christian religion. Life after death has been

and continues to be a primary concern of the church.Within the Christian tradition, the question of the resurrection and the afterlife has been dealt with almost exclusively on the basis of faith, described in the New Testament as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). However, in our day, through information from psi, there is copious evidence that points to the reality, dynamics and dimensions of the afterlife (ARPR 1995, Ashby 1987, Clissold 1982, Gauld 1982, Griffin 1997, Hick 1980 Myers 1961, Osis 1977). This evidence does not replace faith, but complements it and enables persons within and outside of the church to increase their understanding of life after death and to receive comfort, hope and healing when death occurs or when facing their own death.

Preaching

In most churches, especially Protestant, the sermon is the center of worship. Yet, there is usually little emphasis on the afterlife. When the subject is considered, it is mostly confined to holy days such as Easter, All Souls Day and All Saints Day, or to the issues of reward and punishment, which are based on proof texts from the Bible. Although this latter approach has value, it often becomes simplistic and categorical, i.e., an either-or concept, eternal life or eternal damnation. Information from psi can offer other possibilities and explanations of the afterlife and implications for this life.

In my forty years of preaching as pastor in nine churches I have spoken often of the afterlife. The following sermon titles illustrate this subject matter. Jesus and Life after Death; The Transfiguration; Messages and Messengers from God; Life after Life:Promise and Hope; Meaning, Mortality and Guilt; From Death to Life; Born Again and Again; Of Such is the Kingdom of God; Saints Alive; The Parables of Jesus Concerning Life after Death; The Soul's Search; Reflections on the Resurrection; The Communion of Saints; Spirit and Spirits in the Bible; Significance of Dreams in the Life of Faith; Perspectives on the Life and Death of Jesus; The Resurrection of Jesus and its Meaning for Us Today.

In these sermons and others, I have used information and insights from psi. Since psi is still somewhat suspect by most parishioners,I am careful to integrate psi events with scripture. Since I use psi in other aspects of my ministry, (e.g.,teaching, Bible study, counseling),persons,for the most part, are comfortable when it is used in preaching.

Seminars and Study Groups

Seminars and study groups are helpful ways of dealing with death and life after death. Of the various subjects which I have taught in the parish, e.g.,nature and history of the church, Christian social concerns and ethics, the subject of life after death has been one of the most well-attended and appreciated. An appendix to this paper describes a course of study I have used in the parish. It includes an historical survey of beliefs ranging from the primitive to the higher religions; Old Testament and New Testament Views; Philosophical Considerations; Psychical Research and Experiences;and The Significance of Belief in Life after Death.

In conjunction with this teaching ministry, I have published three books, numerous articles, pamphlets and tapes on the subjects of death, dying, life after death and grief. I have used these materials not only in the local parish, but also in teaching hospice groups and in seminars for persons in the helping professions. A list of these resources is included as an appendix.

Funerals

It is at the time of death that the utilization of psi can be most helpful. On these occasions, emotions are painful and the bereaved yearn for comfort, peace and hope. Faith in the words of scripture and the liturgy is often not enough to quell the pain and grief which permeates body, mind and soul. Specific examples of deathbed experiences, communication from beyond, apparitions and visions which are manifold in the history of Christianity (Clissold 1982, Hollenback 1996, Underhill 1967), and in personal experiences of persons now living - these can often ease the immediate suffering and provide comfort and peace for the bereaved, and hope concerning the welfare of the deceased. I use psi information during the dying period, at the time of death,when possible, and afterward.

Scripture

The Bible is formative and normative for the Christian's faith. Bible study is a basic factor in Christian growth and commitment. The scriptures exemplify the melding of the divine with the human. They include a human history and promise a spiritual future. The scriptures provide a devotional tool for building a relationship with God and a channel through which God communicates, inspires and directs one's life.

Within the last 150 years, there have been significant advances in biblical research and interpretation. Historical, textual and literary criticism, interdisciplinary cooperation, and the discovery of ancient texts, e.g., Dead Sea Scrolls, have contributed to a better understanding of scripture. However, biblical scholars, clergy and religious educators have given virtually no attention to psi experiences in the Bible. Accounts of human and angelic visitants, visions, clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy, precognition and communication from the deceased are either ignored or interpreted as myth, allegory, legend, poetic imagery or symbolism.

A brief review of some of the better known happenings indicative of psi illustrates the abundance and significance of this activity in the Bible.

There are over 125 references to angels and their missions and messages (Cruden 1930). The books of Genesis, Exodus, Joshua and Judges record numerous paranormal experiences of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua and other patriarchs. These experiences include angelic and human visitants, clairvoyance, clairaudience, precognition, telepathy and dream interpretation (The Holy Bible 1989, Elliott 1959, Heron 1974). The mediumship of the woman of Endor (I Sam 28:3-25), which one interpreter describes as ventriloquism (Elliott 1959,123); the supernormal phenomena in the adventures of Elijah - precognition, materialization and dematerialization (I Kings 17:1-7, 18:20-40, II Kings 2:11); and those

of Daniel, which include precognition, protection from lions and fire, dream interpretation, automatic writing (Dan 2:24-45, 4:1-33, 3:19-30, 6:10-24, 5:5-30) are experiences of psi that persons for ages in all cultures have had.

The paranormal events in the New Testament are copious and convincing. Many of these occur in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. These include the Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-8) in which the apparitions of Moses and Elijah appear to Jesus and three disciples; Jesus' walking on the water (Mt 14:22-28); his precognitive insights regarding Judas' betrayal (Jn 13:21-30), the denial of Peter (Jn 13:36-38) and the woman at the well (Jn 4:1-30); the raising of Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11:1-40), plus many other acts of Jesus which indicate psi phenomena.

The resurrection of Jesus is especially significant in relation to psi activity. All four gospels and numerous writings of Paul refer to the resurrection in which there appear accounts of identity and recognition after Jesus' death, his verbal communication with the living, apparitions and promises and assurances of the reality of the afterlife. (Batzler 1979,111-15).

As extraordinary and exciting as these biblical events are, it must be realized that all of them were for the purpose of increasing faith and serving God and humankind. The signs and wonders are not ends in themselves.

Thus,we see that comparison of the biblical records with those of psi reveals numerous commonalities. This intimate connection between the two is important in assessing the value of psi for parish ministry. Both scripture and psi assume the existence of an objective supernormal reality, veiled and varied though this reality may be. Both state the world of our present consciousness is just one of several or many worlds, and that human beings are not confined to time and space. Both show that this transcendent reality includes the survival of consciousness in some form, occasionally appearing as the semblance of a former self. Both indicate that these otherworldly lives can and do communicate with and influence persons in this world. Both provide specific evidence for life after death. Both understand the super-normal through the actual experience rather than through reason. Both emphasize that the manner in which we live here and now has consequences for the afterlife. Both declare that life beyond has meaning and that persons should be aware of this and give attention it. Both enhance the value of the spiritual life in a materialistic age.

In considering these facts, it is obvious that the study of scripture in conjunction with psi information can shed more light on the afterlife as well as life now.

Counseling

Pastoral counseling is an important aspect of parish ministry. It is especially so in the areas of dying, death, grief and the afterlife. The counseling allows for in-depth dialogue concerning substantive issues and is not limited by the constraints of time. Fears and apprehensions concerning

the actual dying process, questions about relationships, of loss of identity, of ceasing to be and of the unknown are common concerns and can be dealt with on a one-to-one basis. It is here that the utilization of psi can help in the resolution of fears and the facilitation of the grieving process. In using psi information, the counselor needs to be conversant with the dynamics and limits of psi and to use discretion and employ other psychotherapeutic techniques.

A brief summary of some case histories shows the possibilities that psi has for healing the wounds of grief and other death-related concerns, and for providing information important for everyday living. A striking example of the latter is the case of a medical doctor, a member of my congregation, who planned to go to Ghana as a medical missionary. He wanted to know more about how best to deal with his patients from another culture. I told him about the spiritual healing work of Olga Worrall and together we visited her. During a sitting, the long-deceased uncle of the doctor appeared , speaking in a strange language(xenoglossolalia). The doctor had a rudimentary knowledge of the language and received some helpful advice. This experience not only provided insight from the other side, but opened the doctor to the value and possibilities of using psi in his work.

Another member of a congregation I was serving suffered insomnia after her mother died. One night, while awake, the apparition of her mother appeared and assured her daughter that all was well. Thereafter, the insomnia disappeared. My having discussed earlier various aspects of psi with the parishioner enabled her to be familiar with and accepting of the reality of the on-going life and use the experience for the healing of her insomnia.

In counseling persons who had made threats, gestures or attempts to commit suicide, I have been able to use psi, in conjunction with other psychotherapeutic procedures, to deal with the problems. I have detailed this approach in my book, The Rising Tide of Suicide.

Dreams have played an important role in coping with problems of death and the afterlife. One case involved a widowed parishioner who was troubled by a recurring dream about her husband who was having an intimate relationship with a woman in the spirit world. In dreams we often appear as other persons. Helping the widow to see that she could be this woman, rather than this being an afterlife reality, relieved her pain and eliminated the recurring dream.

There are occasions in which one dreams of a happening in the afterlife, but which may in fact be a visitant from the unseen world. For instance, a depressed and anxiety-ridden terminally ill parishioner had a recurring dream of a robed male figure who always appeared, but never showed his face. One night the figure revealed his face as that of Jesus. The patient regarded this as the actual appearance of Jesus, rather than a dream, and was thereby assured of his continued presence with her then and in the afterlife. After that ,the dream terminated and she was at peace. My psi counsel with her helped in her dying process.

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In several somewhat similar cases, apparitions appeared to the bereaved family members, offering assurance that all was well in their afterdeath state. What is convincing about these cases is that the apparitions appeared not to just one, but to all of the family members almost simultaneously. These experiences correspond to others which nurses, with patients at the time of death, have related to me.

In addition to these cases, my own dreams have been helpful in diagnosing and solving problems involving grief. This is another indication that one who is familiar with and open to the reality and possibilities of psi, more readily receives helpful information from the other side. When the pupil is ready, the help appears. The readiness is all. Chanc favors the prepared mind.

Conclusion

The existence of Christian doctrines and dogmas that are based on old traditions and religious authorities, the controversies within and among churches over the interpretation of scripture and ethical principles, the diminishing supply of clergy and the steady decline of membership in most major denominations indicate the need for renewal within the church. The message of this presentation is that psi can be an effective resource for personal and church renewal. Within the context of the church, psi helps individuals to perceive and differentiate the many forms and intensities of human and divine stimuli. The psi experience in conjunction with the spiritual experience provides an inner sensitivity that contributes to the understanding of self and others, and gives one the ability to become aware of one's relationship to God and responsive to God's will. In the journey of faith, psi affirms the spiritual nature and value of persons, posits priorities and clarifies purpose, presents new insights for biblical understanding and fosters the search for truth. A serious and intelligent use of psi can be instrumental in the church's reexamination of theological dogmas and doctrines and enhance the worship, prayer and healing activities of the church, and offer special counsel for the care of the dying and the bereaved.

However, in affirming the value and validity of psi, we need to realize that signs and wonders are not ends in themselves, nor are they the goal of the spiritual life. Nor will psi solve all of the enigmas in scripture, theology and the many problems that plague persons within and without the religious community. It is only if persons see psi as a pointer to the ultimate source from which all gifts come- only then will their lives be enriched, enabled, ennobled and empowered.

I would like to end this presentation on a personal note. My beliefs about the significance of psi in the religious quest are based primarily on my personal and professional experiences in psi and the church. These experiences have afforded me new insights into scripture, given direction and depth to my total ministry, enlarged my vision and increased my comprehension of beyond-sense realities, deepened and made more meaningful my faith and prayer life, provided new awareness and appreciation of

the mystical and psi heritages of Christianity and other religions, enabled me to better understand and be more discerning about occultism, cults and spiritualism and mediumship, revealed new possibilities for healing and helped me personally and professionally to better cope with dying, death, grief and life after death. Last, but not least, my involvements in psi and ministry in the church have led me to persons who have become some of my best friends and most respected colleagues.

Appendices

Study Course Used in the Parish and Other Groups

The Quest for Eternal Life

I. HISTORICAL SURVEY

- Primitive
- Sumero-Semitic
- Egyptian
- Chinese
- Indo-Iranian
- Greek
- Islam

II. OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

- Non-existence
- Sheol
- Resurrection
- Gospels
- Pauline Writings
- Revelation

III. PHILOSOPHY

- Universal Assent
- Pragmatic
- Teleological
- Analogical
- Moral
- Justice and Righteousness
- Ontological
- Phenomenological

IV. PSYCHICAL APPROACHES

- Out of Body
- Apparitions
- Audible Voice
- Reports of Recent Dead
- Possession
- Automatic Writing
- Spirit Photography
- Recorded Spirit Voices
- Materialization
- Deathbed Visions
- Near Death Experiences

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF BELIEF IN ETERNAL LIFE

Psycho-physical health
Moral-ethical
Spiritual vs Material Existence
Church Renewal
New Approaches to Truth

BOOKS AND ARTICLES BY LOUIS RICHARD BATZLER

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Sunlight and Shadows, 1986

The Rising Tide of Suicide, 1988

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Going and Growing through Grief. Living Health Bulletin No. 21, 1983

Teaching Children about Death and Dying, Living Health Bulletin No. 9, 1983

Articles in Journals of Spiritual Frontiers and The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research

Spiritual Frontiers	A R P R
Spring, 1969	
Summer, 1986	July, 1991
Summer, 1988	May, 1990
Summer, 1990	July, 1997
Spring, 1996	

Five printed pamphlets on Healing, Death and Dying, Grief

Tapes

Comfort and Hope for the Dying

Life after Death

Eight-hour Seminars on Death and Dying
Grief
Child Death

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CHRISTIAN HOPE AND THE ETHOS OF BEREAVEMENT

Mary Carman Rose

Of the many facets of the Christian response to bereavement I have chosen for emphasis what I call the current attempt to use empiricism without adequate attention to the spiritual as well as intellectual preparation and investigative experience the thinker must bring to his study of bereavement. My thesis is that as important as any aspect of the investigation of Christian responses to bereavement is the individual investigator's capacity to understand the Christian's love of God, his trust in God, and his hope for eternal life, which are the very essence of Christian faith and hence of the response to bereavement. I also mention as desiderata in the preparation of the investigator an openness to understand the teaching of the world religions and a commitment to a non-Christian world religion which will enable the individual to comprehend the nature and import of religious commitment.

PRESUPPOSITIONS. The concept of a "spiritual path" is necessary to my articulation of that specific Christian response to bereavement with which I am concerned in this essay. By a "spiritual path" I mean a set of beliefs which pertain to aspects of reality which may be interpreted as fundamental to the spiritual and intellectual potentialities of the individual and to the individual's most basic relations to reality. In my opinion the world religions are such spiritual paths. To be sure, perennially there those that deny the importance and, indeed, the very meaningfulness of the teaching of these spiritual paths. Notably these are thinkers who urge the acceptance of cynicism (i.e., the view that the highest good for the individual is the denial that it is spiritually beneficial to desire to possess objective truth concerning reality and man; or skepticism (i.e., the view that there is any objective truth concerning man and reality that the human mind can achieve; or relativism (i.e., the view that all beliefs concerning reality and man are entirely derivative from and hence dependent on particular cultures). I am setting aside these three types of denial of the very great import of acceptance of a spiritual path which I intend to support in this essay. Further, I am interested only in those spiritual paths which support the cultivation of agape-- i.e., which I see as based in the view that potentially for every human being there is spiritual fulfillment in the cultivation of the love that desires with integrity, loyalty, and compassion to serve the well being of other persons--and I want to add to this the concern for the well being of animals. I also presuppose that each of the world religions offers spiritual paths which foster these values according to the degree and types of its insight into agape.

THEME OF THIS PAPER. Here I will develop aspects of one (among several possible) Christian responses to the certainty of one's eventual physical death; to the possibil-

ity of avoiding what some Christians see as the necessity of accepting an agnosticism concerning the nature of eternal life; and to the possibility of developing a Christian response to bereavement based in Jesus' revelation "I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) I believe that this Revelation pertains to the benefits of Christian faith in this life. But I also believe that this life can be immeasurably enriched for the Christian who possesses the gift--i.e., the grace--to hope for an on-going, permanent relatedness to those he has loved and who have passed on to a different and a better life.

REASONS FOR MY EMPHASIS ON CHRISTIANITY. By "world religions" I mean the three Western theisms (i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and among Eastern religions, Confucianism, Taoism, the varieties of Buddhism, and the varieties of Hinduism. I am stressing what seems to be an important fact concerning these world religions: viz., that each is worthy of our respect because each has served the spiritual needs and also some of the correlative intellectual needs of many individuals. A corollary of this presupposition is that so far no one of these religions has proved satisfactory for all persons. And, of course, as I have indicated, there are persons who reject them all. Another presupposition of this essay is that only persons who believe what any one religion teaches and who try to appropriate its teachings will come to understand that religion--i.e., to understand the existential meaning of the words in which at least some beliefs have been successfully articulated and what these beliefs require of the faithful.

I have stated these presuppositions because it is traditional Trinitarian orthodox Christianity which--to my surprise but also to my intellectual satisfaction and great joy--I have been enabled to accept as my way of life. The Christian view of reality and of our relation to the Creator God becomes increasingly satisfactory to me and I find that my faith in the truth of traditional Christianity grows stronger with the passing years. Further, in the forty years that I have tried to live the Christian teachings, I have grown in my belief that the promises made in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament are of vital importance for the Christian life: e.g., "I will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on me" (Isaiah 26:3); and "Peace I leave with you..." (John 14:28). Then there is also the wisdom of the advise given by St. Paul: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." (Philippians: 4:4)

CONCERNING "APPROPRIATION" OF THE BELIEF IN ETERNAL LIFE. A book could be written on the concept of "appropriation of religious beliefs". I will include here only what I need to continue this inquiry. Individual technical words which are used in current philosophical discourse frequently have different meanings in different contexts, for the meaning of any one of them is usually determined by the concepts, the goals, and the presuppositions which shape that inquiry. What of the meaning of "appropriation"? Of course, in general "appropriation" means the acceptance of a belief in such a way that it becomes a permanent factor

shaping one's attitudes, interpretations of life experiences, responses to the persons one encounters, and the goals which one espouses. One's appropriation of any one Christian belief usually is expressed in one's overt behavior (i.e., in the observable aspect of one's appropriation of that belief. The heart of appropriation of one's religious beliefs, of course, lies in the individual's subjectivity, his inwardness, his intentions and hopes which are not directly observed.

The inquirer into Christian spiritual experience and development not only may but must draw on his personal experience with his appropriation of Christian beliefs and also with his experience with religious doubt, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, with his moments of realization that he has achieved deeper insight into what he believes and a stronger faith. I know that my conscious subjectivity is in part shaped by my belief that I am destined for eternal life. From one point of view, I consider my belief in eternal life--and all my additional speculative beliefs concerning that life--as an extended complex hypothesis. This means that when I view it from that perspective I see that belief not as a certainty that I can declare publicly as such nor as supported by evidence that is incontrovertible--i.e., that can never be falsified or become the subject of doubt or considered as based in evidence that is too meager for use in inquiry concerning Christian response to bereavement. This articulation and understanding of the epistemology of my belief as a hypothesis is for use when I talk with others or write an article for publication having to do with survival of physical death.

I call this phase of my Christian faith "dialogic inquiry" because I am willing to discuss it with persons committed to study of matters related to my faith. At least I am willing to share it within the limitations of language and also the limitations of talking to colleagues who are willing to confess their presuppositions that the experiences I need to talk about either did not exist at all or were generated solely out of my emotional needs. To my mind this dialogic inquiry has several presuppositions. I will give three of them here.

First, I am able to name Christians of the past who have left records of the satisfactoriness of Christian faith to them and who often had experiences akin to mine. Second, like a great many Christians, I have had experiences which would appropriately be called "psychic experiences" and which I interpret as gifts deriving from the kindness and wisdom of God. These I take to be sources of support for my hypothesis that traditional Christianity is true and, further, is true for me. Third, there is a great tradition of distinctly Christian mysticism--one thinks of St. Augustine and St. Monica, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, and, I suggest, Therese of Lisieux. And the Christian mystics give reports of their personal one-to-one relation to God.

But the case is different in my personal reflection about my Christian faith and belief and, in particular,

with belief in my eternal life and my attitude toward bereavement. This I will call "monologic inquiry" because as I carry it on I am determined to come to my conclusions by myself, though in coming to my conclusions I may (but need not) discuss my concerns with others or learn about those concerns from what I read. Of course, monologic inquiry should be seen as having two meanings.

First, dialogic inquiry may include monologic inquiry. And perhaps, ideally, some dialogical inquiry will include as many currents of monologic inquiry as there are persons involved in the inquiry and who will contribute their monological coming to conclusions to the cooperative thinking of the group. Second, however, there is the individual who ultimately in independence of his discourse with others asks himself what, in my opinion, it is very important to think of as "the Socratic question". I am referring here to the question Socrates reveals that he asked himself before he began to undertake to bring about a spiritual and intellectual leavening among the young men of Athens. I refer to the event in Socrates' early life which Plato referred to in the "Phaedrus" in which Socrates declared that he wanted to know about himself: "...am I a monster more complicated and swollen with passion than the serpent Typho, or a creature of a gentler and simpler sort to whom nature has given a diviner and lowlier destiny?" ("Phaedrus" 230A) Obviously Socrates thought he had a choice in the matter of his future spiritual development and chose to become the creature of "a diviner sort." If the Christian who makes that choice mourns the death of a person who was close to him, he will resolve to try to maintain hope for the peace which Jesus promised to bestow on all believers. And he will try to rejoice in that faith as St. John advised. The essence of this type of monological inquiry is the solitary firmness of the person who maintains a commitment to the strength of his own needs, on the one hand, but also to what he sees as the great possibility of his eventual reunion with the persons who from the secular point of view are now forever lost to him. This commitment is indeed monological. The individual chooses and maintains that choice by himself. All by himself he has experiences and receives insights that indicate to him that his beliefs and hopes are objectively true.

DIVERSE ATTITUDES TOWARD BEREAVEMENT. Of course, individuals differ in their attitude toward their own experience of bereavement and in their beliefs concerning the spiritual and intellectual potentialities of bereavement. I often recall with dismay the atheistic professor of philosophy who at a meeting of the Society for Philosophy of Religion not only denied the possibility of life after death but became vulgar and cruel in his ridiculing those of us who hope for survival. I have talked with Christians who assert that they have never thought of survival of physical death in connection with their own friends and relatives. They mourn. But they do not reflect on the significance to them of the Christian belief in survival of death. I have heard a Christian philosopher who was the featured speaker at a meeting of the Society for Philosophy of Religion declare, with proper decorum that, though he is a Christian, he believes that survival of death is impossible. But, when during the

discussion which followed his talk I defended my Christian hope for survival he manifested something like psychological violence because I defended this view.

My intent here is to draw attention to some aspects of my own Christian faith which may appeal to a person who cultivates what I will call " an existential involvement" with a belief in eternal life--i.e., a belief which is consciously foundational in the Christian's subjectivity which guides his thought and his behavioral expression of his thought.

A NEGLECTED ASPECT OF CURRENT INQUIRY. At the present time those undertaking investigation of a new area are usually expected to rely on the epistemology of empiricism--i.e., the formulation of a question pertaining to the new area, the collection of data related to the question, and the working out of a tentative answer to the question which is subsequently tested in experience until it is found to be inadequate, or in need of modification, or is accepted as possibly an adequate answer to the question.

I suggest, however, that before we begin to use some form of empiricism to investigate the ethos of a view of bereavement, we need to examine some distinctive features of our area of inquiry. A frequently neglected area in empirical inquiry which I have in mind is one aspect of what constitutes adequate preparation for carrying on the inquiry. And in respect to the study of responses to bereavement, I suggest that not enough attention is paid to the spiritual nature of the investigator. It seems clear to me that the person who wishes to study any aspect of spirituality must himself have understanding of the spirituality as well as the behavior and the words of the individuals in whose lives he finds the data required for his investigation. In these lives there is a sustained commitment to the traditional Christian beliefs concerning the personhood of the Triune God and the revealed promise of unchanging divine interest in response to that type of commitment with its faith in and dependence on the Three-Personed God.

These requirements of understanding lay investigative responsibility on those who attempt the study of Christian experience of bereavement along with its possible mystical and psychic components. And there are at least three types of attitude which brought to this investigation will be illumining. First, these investigators may be believers in the Revelation given through Christ. Such persons will very likely have had experiences analogous to those of the Christians they are questioning and observing. Second, whatever may be the spiritual and intellectual background of the individual investigator, they will need to be genuinely open to learning of the content and quality of the experience of their subjects. They will need also to have the insight that any spirituality and path that teaches the values shared by the world religions merits respect for what it teaches and for its modes of achieving spiritual development particularly in the facing of life's extremities. And third, those who are committed to one of the non-Christian spiritual paths among the world religions need to open to learn-

ing of the Christian teaching concerning response to the experience of bereavement.

CONCERNING MY WILLINGNESS AND EAGERNESS TO COOPERATE WITH RESEARCH IN RELIGION AND PSYCHISM. There are some generalizations I am willing to make concerning my part in the research concerning Christianity spirituality. I would probably always respond kindly to statements such as "Surely you do not really believe prayer is efficacious in your life" or "I know there are Christians who claim to sense the presence of their loved ones who have gone to the next life, but this is clearly only their imagination." Or I might be moved to make what seems to me to be an honest and helpful response such as the following. I suggest that all Christians should contemplate the present lives of their friends and relatives who have left this life which C.S Lewis called the first and lesser life for what he called the better and second life. This contemplation should include meditation on one's own being as already inherently intended for an eternal life in another world and what this means for all of one's experiences here. I believe that I have friends, family members, former teachers, and authors of books that have influenced my spiritual development that are now living though they have experienced physical death. And a propos of this last, in the Catholic Christian tradition there is a firm presupposition which I use in all my monological thinking about my work as someone committed to support the importance of an on-going philosophical inquiry and development. This is the belief that the saints (in the Catholic sense) are symbols to us of faithfulness to the Triune God and also of the fact that we may-- and ideally will--ask for their help in our maintaining our faith in all our interests and commitments. But this tradition has always included another aspect that in our day gets too little attention. I mean the belief that some of us, at least, have a vocation to continue to cooperate with our beloved dead in doing the work for God's kingdom which has been given to us to do. And I will mention here one more belief which during the past forty years has been increasingly in my thoughts, in all aspects of my life, and in all my hope for future spiritual and intellectual growth in myself and in others. My hope is that there will be growth in appreciation of the beauty and wonder of the human and the other-than-human aspects of creation, both natural and supernatural, sensory and transcendent and, of course, above all growth in the appreciation of the love, beauty, and wisdom of God.

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DYING, DEATH & AFTER DEATH: RANDOM MUSING CONCERNING THE SPIRITUALLY CHALLENGED

by Michael E. Tymn

Abstract: The serious student of psychical research is certain to encounter friends, relatives, associates and acquaintances who are puzzled by his interest, especially his interest in death and, concomitantly, the survival of consciousness. Some will scoff, some will snicker, some will smirk, some will simply smile and sympathetically shake their heads. The author often finds himself musing over such reactions, reciprocally puzzled by the obstinacy of some and the credulity of others, all the while subjecting his own views to a critical examination. This paper represents such random musing.

"The only really blind are those who will not see the truth – those who shut their eyes to spiritual vision."
--Helen Keller (Keller 1994, 154)

"When you're dead, you're dead," my doctor proclaimed quite authoritatively, as if his medical training had qualified him in subjects beyond the earthly shell. His comment was prompted by having noticed a book about near-death experiences I had brought to read in his waiting room.

"The most important thing to know about death is that you'd better make the most of what time you have," the doctor added in such a way as to clearly drive across the point that he does not believe in the survival of consciousness.

While I agreed with his comment about making the most of this lifetime, I doubted that we were anywhere near agreement on our underlying reasons. As I have come to understand it, life is a learning experience aimed at an ultimate graduation to something much greater -- a Godhead that no human can really comprehend -- and death, except for those ready to graduate, is merely a transition to another phase of that learning experience. Can anyone who does not believe in the survival of consciousness view life as a learning experience? Where would the lessons be applied? What is the point of it all?

The doctor expressed concern that my interest in such a *morbid* subject might indicate depression, perhaps even thoughts of suicide. I informed him that such was definitely not the case. I wanted to explain to him that I consider *death* a very positive and uplifting subject, that the study of it helps me embrace this life in a much more courageous and fulfilling way, that it helps me be a better person, that it just simply makes me feel good. I wanted to recite the words of transpersonal counselor and author Lily Fairchilde:

> **"We cannot begin to live fully until we come to terms with the reality of death. We cannot know true courage until we look death in the face and see that it is not a voracious monster with yawning jaws that will eventually gobble up everything we hold precious, but instead a thing of beauty and wonder and great adventure. We will never be free to love fully and without fear until we know deep in our**

hearts the truth that love never dies, but lives on, along with those we have loved, forever." (Fairchilde, 1997, intro xviii)

I wanted to engage the good doctor in a discussion on the subject, to ask him how much, if anything, he knows about near-death experiences, whether he is aware of the growing body of evidence -- even if no more *purely* scientific than his profession -- gathered by reputable physicians and scientists in support of the validity of the NDE. I wanted to ask him if he has investigated psychic phenomena and the paranormal or if he has come to his conclusions from the superficial remarks of his colleagues. I wanted to ask him how much of his profession is probability, or just possibility, rather than certainty.

CYNICAL SNICKERS

But I hesitated and said nothing. I knew he did not have the time to discuss the subject in a meaningful way. It is far too complex, too subjective, too abstract, too controversial, too paradoxical. One cannot in a few minutes turn a subject of supposed morbidity into one of joyfulness, a subject of chaos into one of orderliness and serenity, a subject of dread into one of great expectation. Moreover, I suspected that he would reply with the standard scientific theory that NDEs are nothing more than hallucinations of an oxygen-deprived brain, perhaps enhanced by drugs, and that other psychic and paranormal experiences are figments of the imagination or just plain bunk. If he were like most of my scientifically-minded friends and acquaintances, he would most probably react with a cynical snicker at the mere suggestion that he could possibly be so gullible as to even consider so much folly and fantasy. Such snickers seem endemic to scientists and other skeptics, especially those reared in orthodox religion but then "enlightened" by college professors eager to ravage innocent minds and perhaps establish themselves as mini gods.

I understand the scientific method and I know the scientific mindset, but I must admit to not fully grasping why scientists are always looking for reasons to reject survival evidence rather than for reasons to accept it. It seems like it would be a much more positive approach to recognize that there are things outside the scope of science, and to open the mind to the likelihood that there is a spiritual world that cannot be completely understood by the limited human intellect. The eminent Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung had this to say about such attitudes:

> **"In response to this understandable skepticism, I suggest the following considerations: If there is something we cannot know, we must necessarily abandon it as an intellectual problem. For example, I do not know for what reason the universe has come into being, and shall never know. Therefore, I must drop this question as a scientific or intellectual problems. But if an idea about it is offered to me -- in dreams or in mythic tradition -- I ought of take note of it. I even ought to build up a conception on the basis of such hints, even though it will forever remain a hypothesis which I know cannot be proved. A man should be able to say he has done his best to form a conception of life after death, or to create some image of it -- even if he must confess his failure. Not to have done so is a vital loss."** (Jung 1989, 301-302)

As I drove home from the doctor's office, many thoughts concerning his comments raced through my mind: *He seems like a caring physician and serves his fellow man in a*

very honorable way. Does it make any difference what he believes? It would seem that a person who can do good without regard to reward or punishment in an afterlife is a better person than one who is motivated by such reward or punishment. Philosopher-psychologist William James put it this way:

> **"If religion be a function by which either God's cause or man's cause is to be really advanced, then he who lives the life of it, however narrowly, is a better servant than he who merely knows about it, however much. Knowledge about life is one thing; effective occupation of a place in life with its dynamic currents passing through your being is another."** (James 1961. 380)

On the other hand, my thoughts continued, *will his attitude about survival cause him to be earthbound or flounder in the lower ethers in a state of unconsciousness or semi-consciousness, perhaps not even realizing he is "dead," before at some future time -- whatever form time takes or doesn't take in that realm --awakening to his new surroundings?* In *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying,* Sogyal Rinpoche wrote:

> **"The teachings make it clear that if all we know of mind is the aspect of mind that dissolves when we die, we will be left with no idea of what continues, no knowledge of the new dimension of the deeper reality of the mind. So it is vital for us all to familiarize ourselves with the nature of the mind while we are still alive. Only then will we be prepared when it reveals itself spontaneously."** (Rinpoche 1994, 12*)*

This Eastern belief is present in much of Western mysticism, including the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, the 18th Century scientist who abandoned his scientific career at the age of 56 and devoted his remaining 30 years to spiritual meditation and mediumistic trances in which he traveled out-of-body to spiritual realms and conversed with spirits. He wrote:

> **"People who have not believed, in the world, in any life of the soul after the life of the body, are acutely embarrassed when they realize that they are alive. [They] make friends of others with like mind and are separate from people who were in faith. For the most part, they are attached to some hellish community, because people of this sort have denied the divine..."** (Swedenborg 1976, 349)

But even Swedenborg, said to be one of three people who might have had an IQ higher than Einstein, gets that cynical snicker from most modern-day scientists. There is the assumption that he must have crossed the line that separates genius from lunacy.

My thoughts about my doctor's beliefs continued: *But even if he is able to make a conscious transition to a comfortable realm on the "other side," would it not be more consoling to him in his remaining years on this plane to know that he has a soul that will live on?....How does his attitude toward survival influence his teenage children? Why bring children into the world if all you can offer them is 20 some odd years of growing under your tutelage before you cut them loose for 50 or 60 years of physical decay and then total extinction? What a selfish and cruel act propagation seems in that light* As Jung saw it, the skeptic

"marches toward nothingness" while the believer **"follows the tracks of life and lives right into his death."** (Jung, 306)

I wondered if my doctor might be one of those skeptics who claim to be able to quell the inner voices, focus on the present, and live fully without any trepidation toward what they must see as the obliteration of the personality, all the while contributing to the welfare of society and future generations. On the one hand, it seems like such a courageous and unselfish attitude, but when we ask to what end the legacy, to what generation full fruition, it seems more foolish and myopic. I suspect that William James hit upon the truth of it when he wrote:

> **"I can, of course, put myself into the sectarian scientist's attitude, and imagine vividly that the world of sensations and of scientific laws and objects may be all. But when I do this, I hear that inward monitor of which W. K. Clifford once wrote, whispering the word 'bosh!' Humbug is humbug, even though it bear the scientific name, and the total expression of human experience, as I view it objectively, invincibly urges me beyond the narrow 'scientific' bounds."** (James, 401)

As I continued to ponder my doctor's beliefs, a voice in my mind harshly ordered me to halt. *Who are you to judge?* the voice scolded me. *Who says you have it figured out? Are you not being a little self-righteous? What are your qualifications to question anyone?*

A somewhat softer voice intruded, but was in agreement with the first voice. *Just do your own thing. If the doctor and others like him choose to stumble over their own egos, that's their problem.*

But then a dissenting voice pushed its way between the other two. *No, that's not the attitude. This whole thing is about love, not romantic love, but the caring and compassionate kind. How can one who anticipates total extinction not have at least some deep-seated festering fears concerning the future, whether he is fully conscious of them or not? You're not trying to "save" him. You're just trying to offer him a little comfort. How can you possibly walk away from such an opportunity and still assume that you are on the path of truth, the path of love? If you can just plant a seed that might sprout at some later date, it is your duty to do it.*

THE DEATH PARADOX

The mind rebelled at being an arena for such debate and proceeded to shut off the voices, tuning back into the material world. A few days later, however, the musing resumed as I attended the funeral of a neighbor. As I observed the mourners, the words of French essayist Michel de Montaigne came to mind:

> **"They come and they go and they trot and they dance, and never a word about death. All well and good. Yet when death does come -- to them, their wives, their children, their friends -- catching them unawares and unprepared, then what storms of passion overwhelm them, what cries, what fury, what despair!"** (de Montaigne 1987, 95)

I couldn't help but wonder about the negativity associated with death by most present and contrast that with the attitude of many people whose views on death have changed following a near-death experience. I recalled a video on NDEs in which several experiencers were interviewed. One of them quipped that upon hearing of the death of a friend's father, he wanted to say, "Well, good for him," but he decided it would be more appropriate to offer condolences. Another comment that came to mind was that of John Van Luyk, as reported by author Ian Currie:

> **"I can hardly find words for it -- the most beautiful experience of my life. I had the most peaceful, contented feeling -- but I wish there were different words available to describe it. If you called it peaceful to the 10th power-- that would be getting close to it. When they jolted me out of that, I was really mad. The experience changed my whole outlook on death. I think very different of it now -- I'm not afraid of it at all. As a matter of fact, I sometimes tell my kids that dying is the most beautiful experience you can have but they look at me as if I'm some kind of nut. So far as death is concerned, I can recommend it to anybody."** (Currie 1992, 202)

As I resumed reading the book I had taken to my doctor's office, ***Lessons from the Light***, by Kenneth Ring and Evelyn Elsaesser Valarino, I came upon Dr. Ring's discussion of veridicality studies, those which have in some way been corroborated by witnesses and are not simply unsupported individual reports. Ring, one of the founders of the International Association of Near-Death Studies, begins with the now well-known "shoe on the ledge" case. In that NDE, a woman who had suffered a severe heart attack while visiting relatives in Seattle had an out-of-body experience during a cardiac arrest in the hospital. While still recovering in her hospital bed, she told a social worker of her OBE and how she had looked down from the ceiling watching the medical team at work on her before suddenly finding herself outside the hospital. She vividly recalled seeing a tennis shoe on the ledge of the third floor. She described the shoe in detail to the skeptical social worker, who checked it out and found the shoe in the exact place and exactly as the patient had described it. The social worker concluded that the patient could have in no way seen the shoe otherwise.

While such veridical NDEs are understandably few, it is a bit difficult to write off the hundreds of other documented cases as mere hallucinations. It does seem very strange that dying brains would have such very similar hallucinations. One would think that the variety of hallucinations would be as diverse as nightly dreams. It is also difficult to believe that the "being of light," the instantaneous life review, and the conscious decision as to whether to return to the body or not, common among many near-death experiencers, are all neurological effects or hallucinations. NDE researcher Pamela M. Kircher, M.D., writes:

> **"When people undergo a life review, each instant in their lives is reviewed, not just the 'big' ones. They find that it matters how they treat people in the grocery line or on the freeway. In the life review, they often experience the event, from their own perspective and from the perspective of the person with whom they were interacting."** (Kircher 1995, 94)

Tom Sawyer, a Rochester, N.Y. resident who had an NDE in 1978 when his pickup truck fell on him as he worked under it, tells of reliving an encounter with a man he

almost hit with his hotrod when he was 19. The pedestrian said something to him, which prompted Sawyer to get out of his vehicle and assault the man. During his life review, Sawyer, who says he was an avowed agnostic before his NDE, experienced the attack from the victim's perspective.

> **"[I experienced my] fist come directly into my face. And I felt the indignation, the rage, the embarrassment, the frustration, the physical pain. I felt my teeth going through my lower lip -- in other words I was in that man's eyes. I was in that man's body..."** (Farr 1993, 33)

More than the experience itself, NDE researchers point to the after effects of the experience as proof that these are not mere hallucinations. Ring observes:

> **".....we know that the NDE tends to bring about lasting changes in personal values and beliefs: NDErs appreciate life more fully, experience increased feelings of self-worth, have a more compassionate regard for others and, indeed, for all life, develop a heightened ecological sensitivity, and report a decrease in purely materialistic and self-seeking values. Their religious orientation tends to change, too, and becomes more universalistic, inclusive, and spiritual in expression."** (Ring 1998, 4)

Surely, the skeptics cannot believe that such transformation is simply a neurological happening. Perhaps some of them believe that experiencers like Tom Sawyer are embellishing their stories so that they can sell books or otherwise profit from them. Does the skeptic truly believe that Carl Jung contrived his NDE in order to profit from it? Jung's NDE in 1944 came after he broke his foot and then had a heart attack. He recalled visualizing the earth from high above it and experiencing everything he had ever done and everything that had ever happened to him. In reflecting on his NDE, Jung wrote:

> **"I would never have imagined that any such experience was possible. It was not a product of my imagination. The visions and experiences were utterly real; there was nothing subjective about them; they all had a quality of absolute objectivity."** (Jung, 291)

SUBDUED SMIRKS

A few days later, as I watched the movie ***Saving Private Ryan***, my thoughts returned to death. An early scene showed a foot soldier having his arm blown off as he charged the enemy on the Normandy beach. Yet, he continued to run, seemingly unaware that he had lost a member of his body. I recalled seeing photographs of the phantom counterparts of missing limbs and reading credible accounts of people who, shortly after amputation of a leg, forgot to use their crutches and then walked several steps on their phantom legs.

The thoughts flowed: *With all the evidence to support the existence of an astral body -- soul body, spirit body, etheric body, double, whatever name be assigned to it (or even a third body reported by some) -- why does mainstream science turn its head and not attempt to examine the relationship here between the NDE and that phantom counterpart? Why does science not make a real effort to study people who have the ability to loosen the astral body from the physical body and have out-of-body experiences? Their numbers are not limited to those having NDEs or to the likes of*

Swedenborg, Oliver Fox, Sylvan Muldoon, Frederick Sculthorp and other well-documented astral projectionists of the past; there are so many now incarnate who have this ability. Moreover, there are reportedly many doctors and nurses who have witnessed death-bed apparitions of the dying person. Why can't science see the links?

While the movie was set in World War II, my thoughts wandered back to World War I and to the esteemed British physicist Sir Oliver Lodge and his book, ***Raymond or Life and Death***. I recalled how an agnostic friend had been scanning the books in my personal library during a party in my home and had randomly pulled *Raymond* from the shelf to browse it. To satisfy his curiosity, I explained how Lodge's son, Raymond, had been killed on the battlefield in France and had communicated with Lodge through the famous medium Gladys Osborne Leonard. I mentioned the evidential material that Lodge received, information that no one but Raymond had knowledge of, and which was later verified by the elder Lodge as being true. I explained to my guest how Lodge, one of the most respected scientists of the early part of this Century, subjected all of the information to every scientific test before eventually concluding, beyond a reasonable doubt, that his disincarnate son had actually communicated with him through Leonard. But my guest, whose attitude on such matters is "I have to see it to believe it," responded with only a subdued smirk and shake of his head. Later, after my guests had departed, I pulled *Raymond* back off the shelf and began rereading some of Lodge's words, including these:

> **"Death is not a word to fear, any more than birth is. We change our state at birth, and come into the world of air and sense and myriad existence; we change our state at death and enter a region of -- what? Of ether, I think, and still more myriad existence; a region in which communion is more akin to what we here call telepath, and where intercourse is not conducted by the accustomed indirect physical processes; but a region in which beauty and knowledge are as vivid as they are here: a region in which progress is possible, and in which 'admiration, hope and love' are even more real and dominant."** (Lodge 1916, 296)

SYMPATHETIC SMILES

My musing continued but with a 180-degree shift. Rather than the obstinacy of the skeptic, my thoughts turned to the credulity of my aging parents. Since all they have been taught by the Catholic Church is a heaven in which Jesus walks on clouds and angels play harps, a hell in which the devil reigns supreme over an inferno, and in between a purgatory which is just as bad as hell except that it is not eternal, it is understandable why they look upon death as that "voracious monster" of which Fairchilde spoke. Moreover, they have been taught that except perhaps for Mother Teresa and a saintly few like her, everyone who is "saved" must spend some time, possibly decades or centuries, in the flames of purgatory. How can anyone anticipating such an environment not look upon death with fear and great anxiety?

The thoughts raced through my mind during a visit with my parents: *How is it possible for the Church to have done such a poor job in preparing its faithful for death? How can I possibly share with them what I have come to understand about the "other side" without rocking the foundations of their faith? If I can convince them that the Church has given them a distorted picture of the afterlife, will it cause them to lose faith altogether and perhaps become even more fearful and anxious in their final years? Is it*

better to say nothing? What chance is there that they will accept what I want to tell them when it is not consistent with what they have been told by popes and priests? How can their son, a "heathen" who hasn't attended Mass in 30 years and leans toward a belief in reincarnation, possibly know about such things?

I wanted to share with them the discoveries of Swedenborg, Leonard, Edgar Cayce, Alice Bailey, Rudolf Steiner, and other mystics or clairvoyants who were able to "cross through the veil" while still incarnate and then report on it. I wanted to share with them how their discoveries strongly suggests various planes, spheres, or realms making up the non-material world. I wanted to tell them how so much of this is apparently beyond the human vocabulary and why therefore the Church was forced to use imagery through metaphors, similes, and symbols to describe it. I wanted to tell them how that "fire" the church has indoctrinated them with is really a "fire of the mind" on the very low planes, what they would call hell. I wanted to read to them the words of Alvin Mattson, a Lutheran minister, who made his transition in 1970, as channeled through the British clairvoyant Margaret Flavell Tweddell. Mattson, who found himself on an intermediate plane, reported:

> **From this point we can progress to higher planes -- to higher levels of consciousness. By 'higher' planes I do not mean spatially higher but rather those planes which have a finer vibration... The astral world is almost a replica of your world, except that it is of a finer substance and we are not 'bound' by our objective reality as you are. On the astral plane we are conscious of our personalities and the modes of life we carried out on earth. Therefore, we have denominations on this plane and we continue to practice the rites of our respective churches...On numerous occasions since I arrived here, I have been permitted to go into the higher planes where there is a unity of God-praise, not a segregation of the praise of God."** (Taylor 1975, 41-44)

I wanted to tell my parents how even St. Paul talked about a plurality of heavens (2. COR 12:2-4). I wanted to tell them that those intermediate planes, what they call purgatory, are reportedly quite pleasant, not a blazing inferno. I wanted to tell them that a belief in out-of-body travel, channeling, and other psychic phenomena, does not mean forsaking Jesus or the Bible. I wanted to mention how Swedenborg, Sculthorp, Sawyer, and Mattson all met Jesus during their out-of-body travels.. Since my parents put doctors on a pedestal with priests, I wanted to tell them about George G. Ritchie, M.D., who had an NDE in 1943, and how he encountered Jesus as a brilliant light:

> **"For now I saw that it was not light but a Man made out of light, though this seemed no more possible to my mind than the incredible intensity of the brightness that made up His form."** (Ritchie 1978, 48-49)

I wanted to tell them how Dr. Ritchie, like so many others, also saw every moment of his life played out before him. I wanted to tell them how Mattson reported seeing Jesus:

> **"When I first saw Him, the light and the glory and the surging of power was so tremendous. It was like an avalanche of feeling over me. At the present time I just don't feel that I have found a way in which to describe what it was like -- an indescribable contentment and uplifting, a tremendous ecstasy of feeling on all planes, being**

completely out of yourself, an unusually vivid knowledge of the intense, sympathetic love around you -- the warmth of it, the light of it -- something that is not external but is part of you. It s like a sunrise on a mountain that is covered with snow, when the colors come down and reflect on you -- a dazzling brilliance that would make you close your eyes and yet feel it in every pore or your body. This is the feeling that you have as you come toward the LIGHT." (Taylor, 36-37)

As some evidence that these encounters with Jesus were not mere hallucinations, I wanted to tell my parents that Ritchie, Mattson, Sculthorp, and others all mentioned that Jesus did not look exactly like the pictures we have of Him; and yet, they still knew it was Him. There was so much I wanted to say, but I knew it would bring only sympathetic smiles. My success in communicating with my parents was no greater than with my doctor or my house guest. I again considered my duty or responsibility, if any, in this regard and recalled the words of Alice Gilbert, which she says were telepathically transmitted to her by her son Philip from the "other side":

"To follow another soul into the mire, to walk by its side there protecting it from the ultimate dregs -- this must not be done even by love. Each soul has to trudge alone -- only so, it can learn to fly." (Gilbert 1948, 25)

The musing continued, however: *Does my interest in this subject indicate a twisted personality, as some would suggest? Does it detract from the "real life" things I am or should be involved with? Does it interfere with grasping the lessons of this lifetime? Could it be that I am the blind one, not them? Am I the spiritually-challenged one? Or perhaps the reality-challenged?*

To each question, my answer, after some deliberation, is always a definitive, if not totally objective, "NO!" To "practice" death for an hour or so a day, as I usually do, seems no less important than the hour a day I give to physical exercise to better enrich the quality of this lifetime. As de Montaigne wrote:

"To practice death is to practice freedom. A man who has learned how to die has unlearned how to be a slave. Knowing how to die gives us freedom from subjection and constraint." (de Montaigne, 96)

And yet I am constrained slightly by those cynical snickers, those subdued smirks, those sympathetic smiles of my associates, friends, and relatives. Whenever I feel so constrained, though, I recall the reaction of Professor James to such skepticism: **BOSH!**

Still, I concern myself with the spiritually challenged and wonder if I should resign myself to emulating an unidentified victim of the ***Titanic*** (possibly W. T. Stead, the spiritualist) whose heartfelt story was told by Colonel Archibald Gracie, a survivor. After the ship had gone down, some of those left swimming, including Gracie, climbed on a capsized auxiliary raft. Gracie later told of a moment, referring to it as "a transcendent piece of heroism that will remain fixed in my memory as the most sublime and coolest exhibition of courage and cheerful resignation to fate and fearlessness of death." (21) When the "hero," swimming in the 28-degree cold, approached the raft, someone shouted that there was no room for him. The unidentified man calmly responded: "All right, boys; good luck and God bless you!"

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Death Is Not A Door: The Re-emergence of the Ancient Binary Soul Doctrine in Analytical Psychology and Neuropsychology and its Implications for Our Religious and Cultural Conceptions of the Afterlife

Peter Novak

Abstract: A peculiar afterlife doctrine, which may have been close as humanity has ever come to having a single world religion, has been resurrected by modern science. Cultures everywhere once believed that people have two souls, describing them how modern science now describes the conscious and the unconscious. These souls were once thought to divide apart at death, each going to a different afterlife -- one was often thought to reincarnate, while the other became trapped in a dreamlike netherworld. The findings of modern science suggest that if the two parts did survive death, but divided in the process, the conscious would experience something similar to reincarnation, while the unconscious would experience something like heaven or hell. Such a division would also account for much of what's being reported by today's afterlife researchers, as well as many religious tenets from traditions all over the world.

I bring good news - great news - news of a breakthrough in our scientific understanding of the processes of death and the afterlife. Since my wife's suicide in 1985, I have searched the length and breadth of human culture, exploring, studying, and cataloguing the world's many different afterlife reports, comparing all the available evidence for the soul's survival after death. After years of research, I have been able to identify what seems to be a valid scientific foundation for our many afterlife reports and traditions - a simple, scientifically definable phenomenon which seems to underlie, and substantiate, the vast majority of humanity's different concepts of what awaits our souls after death. Over the last two years, many academicians, psychologists, theologians, ministers, religious leaders, and afterlife researchersaround the globe have endorsed this discovery as a momentous breakthrough.

In this confusing information age, when we are bombarded by what seems to be an endless variety of different reports and descriptions of the afterlife, it is becoming ever more difficult for the average person to continue to believe in life after death. But research into the binary soul doctrine promises to change that, by giving people a way to see all the disparate reports as pointing to the same thing, a way to recognize all the seemingly different reports as but partial perspectives of the same phenomenon - the division of human consciousness after death. By showing that all the reports can be explained by a simple scientific hypothesis, by showing that all the seemingly dissimilar reports and traditions fall in place and integrate neatly together into a single pattern, all seeming to reflect a common underlying phenomenon, humanity can again, I hope, find compelling reason to believe in the great promise of survival.

Take a moment to consider what that would mean. No mystery impacts our personal lives as directly, as deeply, as meaningfully, as the question of death and what comes after. Most of us can't count on ever personally encountering a ghost, or recalling a past life, or having a mystical experience, in our lifetimes. But we will all encounter death. And so will our parents, our children, our friends. Of all the mysteries, death is not only the biggest, it is also the most personal. Most phenomena that are labeled "mysterious" aren't generally experienced by more than 4 or 5 % of the population, and that is, to a large degree, WHY they are mysteries. But death is a whole different

ball game. It impacts 100% of the population. And yet it still remains a mystery.

But big changes have been happening. Over the last 30 years, we've beenblessed with new and exciting research into life after death phenomena, such as Near-Death Experiences, Past-Life Regression, and Ghost research. In the last 5 years alone, over 160 different books on these subjects have been published in the United States and Canada. By now, most people in the West have heard endless tales of everyday people experiencing life-changing visits to heavens and hells, as well as stories of people using hypnosis to uncover memories of past lives in the backs of their own minds, and even a multitude of reports of ghosts and apparitions from all over the world.

And thanks to the information explosion that has occurred in our lifetimes, researchers have, for the first time in history, been also able to collect and study and catalog and compare literally hundreds of different afterlife traditions from cultures and religions all over the world.

Today, all this research, all this information about modern afterlife phenomena, and all these different cultural and religious traditions, is available, right at our fingertips, ready and waiting for us to explore and study and compare. For the first time in history, we can study the afterlife traditions of China, or Egypt, or Hawaii or Australia or Alaska, or literally hundreds of other cultures, and compare their ancient afterlife traditions with what is actually being experienced and reported around the world today.

The modern sociological research into personal afterlife experiences started off very promising. When the early researchers first started to publish their amazing reports about ghosts, Near-Death Experiences, and Past-Life Memories, it seemed like the best news in the world. When we first heard scientific researchers report that people all over the world had described having similar personal afterlife experiences, we said to ourselves, "Hey, great! Today's scientific age is really paying off! Confirmation is coming in from all quarters that life after death is real!" It quickly became clear that the ancient traditions were not dead relics, nor merely academic curiosities, but were in fact still very much alive. Even in the present day and age, people were still having and reporting experiences strikingly consistent with afterlife reports written thousands of years ago.

But as time went on, this blessing became a curse. It eventually became clear that, just like the ancient afterlife traditions of East and West, these modern reports were also directly contradicting each other. If one set of research pointed in one direction, the next set would point in an entirely different direction. People then found themselves asking "Which one of these stories is true?" "How can this one be true if that one istrue?" And finally, "Why should we believe in ANY of them?" What is the truth? I think that the Hindus are right when they say that truth is like an elephant being touched by blind men. You know the story- one man touches the side of the elephant and says it's a wall; another touches the elephant's ear and says it's a blanket; a third touches the elephant's leg and says it's a tree; and a fourth touches the elephant's trunk and insists it's a snake. Each man in that tale was completely convinced of his own interpretationof his experience, and so, each doubted the report, the experience, and probably even the sanity of the three others whose descriptions didn't match up. What none of them realized was that each had experienced a different piece of the truth, but none saw it all, or could imagine how the different reports could possibly fit into the same picture.

After studying afterlife reports for over 13 years, I've become convinced that the great and mysterious secret of death is just like that. In culture after culture, a few rare individuals seem to catch brief and confusing glimpses of the true nature of life after death, but they always return from their paranormal experiences with stories that conflict with the stories of others. And so, for thousands of years, the Earth has been irreconcilably divided

in its beliefs about the afterlife. The East has been convinced of its afterlife scenario - reincarnation, and the West has been convinced of its afterlife scenario- heaven and hell, and primitive cultures have been convinced of their afterlife scenario - ghosts. And like the blind men and the elephant, each has doubted the report, the experience, and probably even the sanity of the others whose afterlife descriptions didn't match up with their own.

Today, humanity can't see the big picture about death, and I think this is far and away the biggest problem facing our civilization today. We only see a bunch of different pieces to the afterlife puzzle, and since those pieces don't seem to even remotely show the same picture, humanity has collectively come to have very little confidence in these reports, and so, very little confidence in life after death at all. It used to be that a person could go all the way from his birth to his grave never hearing anything except his own culture's familiar description of the afterlife. And so, never hearing any other reports, any different descriptions, any contradicting opinions, it was fairly easy for the majority of the population to believe in life after death.

But today we don't have that luxury, and so long as we keep hearing radically different and contradictory descriptions of the afterlife, our generation, and then our children's generation, and then their children's generation, will keep believing less and less in life after death as history marches on.

I'm from Indiana, and I've never been to Canada. But I've always BELIEVED in Canada. Why? Because all the reports I've heard about Canada over the years seemed to be talking about more or less the same place. The reports agreed, and so the reports seemed credible. But the reports we are hearing about the afterlife today are wildly divergent, and don't seem to agree at all. One says heaven or hell. Another says limbo. One says a dreamworld. Another says reincarnation. One says ghosts. Another says extinguishment. Everything and everybody says something different, and mostly it just feels like everyone is pulling my leg.

And that's a tragedy, because a people that doesn't believe in life after death, a people that believes that human life is just temporary and transitory and fleeting, is a people that will not put much value on human lives. And that, I think, is exactly the dynamic we can observe taking place in the world around us in this century.

But, thanks to the discoveries of modern science in this century, we now have an opportunity to change this. An opportunity to perceive how all the different afterlife phenomena, all the different pieces to the puzzle, fit together into a single, simple, obvious picture of the scientific processes of life after death. An opportunity to understand the one cause behind the many effects, perceiving the same hidden pattern behind the most commonly reported afterlife phenomena. Within and behind all the different reports, it is now possible to discern a single, simple, scientifically definable phenomenon - the afterdeath division of the human psyche, which, the evidence now suggests, has been genuinely experienced and conscientiously and accurately described by many, many witnesses down through history.

But our opportunity goes far beyond that - we can share this vision with others, to help others see why all these different afterlife reports do not contradict one another, but actually support and reinforce and substantiate one another. We have an opportunity to give people a reason to deeply believe in life after death again, a reason to believe in the value of human life again, a reason to deeply believe that what they do in this world really does count, that what they do really does make a lasting difference.

I could just announce authoritatively that I have discovered the true nature of death, a truth that has been hidden from humanity's view, lost and forgotten for thousands of years (God knows enough religious leaders around the world have done just that over the years).

But if I say that, my testimony means nothing. I can also report, truthfully, that many experts - university professors, paranormal researchers, and theologians around the world - are all celebrating this new discovery. But if I say that, their testimony also means nothing. Today, what we need is not to have some supposed expert make some authoritative announcement that we're all just supposed to lay down and meekly accept - what we all need is to be able to see the lay of the land for ourselves, and to arrive at our own conclusions.

This discovery is not a psychic revelation. I am not a psychic or a mystic. I have seen no visions, heard no voices, and do not ask anyone to take my word for anything. All of the information I present in this article are easily confirmable facts, yet the startling conclusion they lead to is so obvious one's own mind and one's own logic and one's own common sense will convince them of its truth.

In this lecture, I present the simple, recorded, verifiable facts about what has been reported about life after death around the world and back through history. And then I will introduce a pattern, a map, a simple scientific hypothesis - the division of consciousness - that fits and explains, and even predicts and anticipates those reports perfectly. This map fits the afterlife reports of cultures thousands of years ago just as well as it fits the most recent reports of today's scientific researchers.

Eleven years ago, I recognized a pattern in the data, a meaningful pattern that would make sense out of all the different afterlife phenomena being reported. This pattern strongly suggests that survival after death does occur. And that's good. But this is not a particularly rosy or reassuring picture of the afterlife. It is not a realm of guaranteed endless bliss, such as Christianity's heaven or Buddhism's Nirvana. Nor is it a realm of guaranteed endless, deathless, invulnerability - such as Hinduism's eternal reincarnation. It is, however, a concept of survival after death that ancient cultures all over the world once knew and described - the binary soul doctrine - a teaching which our modern culture forgot long ago.

I am convinced that this vision is the very same revelation that has changed and shaped cultures again and again in humanity's past. Whole cultures have, the evidence suggests, looked into this face of death, and were changed. Empowered. Electrified. The evidence suggests that this vision is the underlying premise of the ancient religious culture of Egypt, as well as Christianity and many other hallmarks of human history. Entire cultures, I am convinced, have been transformed by it. Empires have been built upon it. Great religions lasting for thousands of years have been conceived by it. Even though they all now seem to be very different, culture after culture seem to have began with a single vision, a single insight - the secret of death - the division of consciousness after death.

In September, 1985, my wife committed suicide, leaving me to raise our 5-month old daughter, Ayriel, alone. At the time I hadn't given death a single thought in my entire life. I had been going on the unconscious and unchallenged assumption that the stories about death and the afterlife that I had been taught by my culture as a child were accurate enough. But when my wife died, it slowly dawned on me that the day would come when Ayriel would start asking questions, like, "where is mommy now?" What did I know? I was only 27 years old, and had never thought about death before. I wanted to be ready and able to give Ayriel something more than hollow answers to her questions. She wasn't going to have a mother, so I figured she should at least have something more than platitudes about why that was. So I started exploring the world's different reports about death and the afterlife. I studied books about Near-Death Experiences, Past-Life Memories, ghosts and apparitions, and what seemed like an endless river of sacred scriptures and scholarly papers on different cultural afterlife traditions. I soon realized that 99% of all afterlife reports fall into just three categories - netherworld, reincarnation, or ghosts, and these three categories

did NOT paint the same picture about what happened after death.

In the netherworld reports, the souls of the dead spend eternity in some other world, typically retaining their sense of identity, their feelings, emotions, and memories. In the reincarnation reports, the souls of the dead lost their memories and then returned to earth to be born all over again. In the ghost reports, the souls of the dead seemed to be strangely stuck in time, and suffering from some form of severe mental impairment. Actually, in each of these categories, the soul or spirit or whatever seemed to be suffering from some degree or type of mental impairment.

I discovered that the teaching of reincarnation is being powerfully reinforced and substantiated today, by the modern practice of Past-Life regression, a hypnotic technique that has, at least on occasion, provided what seems to be very compelling evidence in support of the doctrine of rebirth. The now-famous research of Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia (Stevenson, 1975-83) has also contributed to the ever-increasing weight of modern evidence supporting reincarnation. Reincarnation, of course, includes a degree of mental impairment - aloss of memory in-between lives. But new evidence suggests that this is not the whole story. Individuals who have undergone Past-Life Regression, being hypnotically regressed to a point in time in-between lives, have often reported a common experience, a very strange and unexpected phenomenon. They find themselves floating aimlessly, peacefully, totally alone in an empty void. They don't remember their own names. They don't remember their previous life at all. They don't remember ever doing anything except floating quietly alone in this empty void. Curiously, these subjects also report a complete absence of feeling and emotion while in this void. They are in emotional absolute zero, feeling nothing, very calm and unperturbed, not feeling connected to anything or interested in anything or desirous of anything, asemotionally vacant as a computer on a desk (Whitton, 1986; Steiger, 1996; Woolger, 1988).

The tradition of the netherworld, or heaven and hell, has also received a tremendous shot in the arm in the last few decades, in the form of Near-Death Experiences. People from all over have reported visiting all sorts of heavens and hells. But again, various forms of mental impairment appear in these reports. Immediately after leaving the body, while subjects describe themselves as just 'floating above their bodies', they often report a strange loss of feeling and emotion. Subjects report feeling strangely detached and emotionally unconnected to the body, and the people, and the world they just left behind. (Sabom, 1982; Grey, 1985) This loss of emotion has always seemed like a very unusual reaction to me. It just doesn't makes sense that the average person would feel this way after just consciously experiencing his own death, leaving his failing body, leaving his wife and his family and his career, being cut off from all his hopes and dreams and ambitions and precious plans for the future. It just doesn't seem logical to me that a person who has just experienced all this would react with a flat emotional nonchalance. If it happened to me I'd expect to be hysterical. But apparently, for some reason, just the opposite is the case - one of the most consistently mentioned features of Near-Death Experiences is this flat emotional state immediately after leaving the body. And as if that wasn't strange enough, subjects then go to the exact opposite extreme. They report experiencing a life review - an extremely vivid "rerun" of their entire life's memories. During this, their emotional state changes dramatically. Instead of having no emotion, now they seem to experience nothing BUT emotion. They often describe overwhelming feelings of profound joy, or sometimes heart-wrenching misery. Every forgotten feeling, every nuance, every sensation, is relived, all saturated with intense emotion (Moody, 1975). Following this, they find themselves in a realm completely different from the empty void described by Past- Life

Regression subjects. This version of the afterlife is filled with meaning, and with a lot of company. In the heavenly experiences, they often find themselves being welcomed by delighted friends and loved ones. In the hellish experiences, they are often viciously confronted by ghouls and demons. But either way, they do not find themselves alone, and those they do encounter interact with them and affect them on a deep and meaningful level.

In some ways, this realm seems like a dream-world, a place in which one's thoughts produce immediate results. In this realm, if you merely think of going to a place, you immediately find yourself at that place. If you think of a lake, you find a lake right in front of you. If you think of anything, that is what you experience. Instead of the normal laws of physics, things work the way they do in dreams.

More forms of mental impairment also appear in these reports. Subjects have repeatedly mentioned seeing inhabitants of these realms who seem to be mentally impaired. These inhabitants often seem to be in some sort of dire and unfortunate situation, which they could get out of very easily if only they tried, but they don't try, and they can't seem to figure out that they could get out if only they did try (Moody, 1977). To me, this speaks of a loss of independent free will, and a loss of rational intellect.

Emmanuel Swedenborg would agree. He was an 18th century Christian visionary who founded the Swedenborgian New Church, and taught that the souls of the dead lose their objective intellect, and can no longer figure things out for themselves, or exercise their own independent free will, after death. (Swedenborg, 1979) Swedenborg was not alone in this opinion. The ancient Greeks (Brandon, 1967), Egyptians (El Madhy, 1989), Hebrews (Job), Hawaiians (Long, 1994), Chinese (Seidel, 1987), and many other peoples all believed that the souls of the dead lose the ability for clear logical thought.

Ghosts, of course, are also consistently described as exhibiting extreme mental impairment. Report after report paints haunting ghosts as mindless recordings stuck on automatic replay (Melton, 1996), repeatedly reliving their memory of some emotionally traumatic event (Guiley, 1991). They seem unconscious, almost never noticing the presence of others, or for that matter even the presence of new walls and new floor-plans that have been erected in the building since they died (Guiley, 1992). In many ways they seem to be stuck in the past. In the reports of the ancients just as the most modern reports of today, the ghosts of the dead are seen wearing the same clothing and hair styles they wore while alive, an exact visual double of what they looked like when alive. These haunting ghosts seem for all the world to be sleepwalkers stuck in their own memories, completely unconscious and entirely unaware of their surroundings, going through the same motions night after night, wearing the same outdated clothing, walking the same paths, reliving the same emotional traumas. One of the most famous early pioneers of paranormal research, F.W.H.Myers, suggested that these haunting ghosts are the dreams of the dead, somehow made visible (Melton, 1996). But if so, they keep having the same dreams, over and over again, with little or no variation.

Usually these sleepwalking ghosts can't be communicated with at all. In the rare instances when they do communicate, it almost always takes the form of pictures, images, and symbolism. It is always a "Right Brain" kind of communication, almost never using either spoken words or written language. Instead, they use visual images, or sometimes smells or natural sounds to relay their messages. In most ancient accounts of ghosts, as well as the reports from primitive indigenous peoples, ghosts almost never manifest articulate human speech. Instead, they are said to "chirp like crickets", or speak with "thin whistles" or "squeaks."

While the haunting ghost is, statistically speaking, far and away the most commonly reported category of ghost, another type is also frequently reported - the "lost soul" type

ghost. These ghosts are very different from the former category in almost every respect. They do not seem to be stuck in the past, but in the eternal present - they seem to have no memory at all. When they are seen, they don't seem to know where they are or how they got there, or, for that matter, even who they are. They typically wander aimlessly, or follow others they encounter. Unlike haunting ghosts, the "lost soul" type ghost does seem to be fully conscious of his surroundings, and does recognize the presence of others. In fact, one of the biggest differences between the two types is that the "lost soul" type ghost is verbal and articulate. It regularly communicates with those it meets with words and language. But it is typically very confused and disoriented (thus the "lost soul" label).

So, after spending many years researching humanity's afterlife reports and traditions, this was where I found myself - back to square one, dead in the water, confronting this ancient deadlock, this seemingly eternal conflict of opinion. The vast majority of reports, I found, fell into three broad categories, three seemingly irreconcilable versions — reincarnation, netherworld, and ghosts, which in many respects directly contradicted one another. And if the three most commonly repeated descriptions of the afterlife all contradict one another, I miserably realized, none of them could be seen as evidence of survival! And while these reports all do conflict with one another in many ways, they do all agree in at least one important respect: in each of these, the souls of the dead almost always exhibit some degree of mental disorientation and mental incapacitation. In report after report, a disruption, and sometimes a permanent termination, of certain mental abilities was indicated.

But which version was right? There seemed no way to make an intellectually honest choice for one of these, rejecting the others. Each had what seemed to be very compelling evidence in support of its own vision of what awaits us after death. And since these different visions directly contradicted one another, it seemed they could never be reconciled. My heart sunk. What was I to tell my daughter? I didn't know, but almost blindly kept studying, seeking, exploring. Slowly, it dawned on me - there was yet another widespread afterlife tradition I'd not noticed before, a tradition that showed up in literally dozens of different cultures and scriptures - the binary soul doctrine. Cultures all over the world, I started to notice, once believed that people have not one, but two souls, and that those two souls divided apart at death. This peculiar concept, which seems to have been embraced on virtually every continent, was possibly the closest thing this planet has ever had to a single world religion.

I hadn't heard of this binary soul doctrine before, and hadn't been looking for it. But once I noticed it, I saw it everywhere, in report after report, in culture after culture. This simple little idea, I discovered, is like the "Forrest Gump" of life after death concepts. It seems to have an uncanny knack for turning up, again and again and again, in the earliest afterlife traditions of people after people on this planet. Ancient Egypt (Crehen, 1976; El Madhy, 1989; Budge, 1967; Ries, 1987; Davies, 1987), Israel (Hebrews 4:12; Ries, 1987), the early Christian Gnostics (Ries, 1987), Persia (Ries, 1987; Gnoli, 1987; Brandon, 1967), Greece (Brandon, 1967; Ries, 1987; Bremmer, 1987), India (Ries, 1987; Mumford, 1999), Islam (Ries, 1987), China (Seidel, 1987; Ries, 1987), Australia (Riviere, 1987; Ries, 1987), Hawaii (Long, 1994), Alaska (Ries, 1987), the Dakota tribe of North America (Riviere, 1987), and many other indigenous peoples of North (Ries, 1987) and South America (Ries, 1987; Riviere, 1987), Africa and Eurasia (Ries, 1987) all subscribed to this binary soul doctrine.

If this binary soul doctrine was once so widespread, why hadn't I heard of it before? In this age of technological marvels, we like to think we are great, that we know it all and have it all figured out, but in at least one very important way, it seems to me that we have

remained amazingly near-sighted. Mankind has populated this planet for at least 100,000 years, science now indicates, but our ability to perceive the actual details of our cultural thoughts and beliefs doesn't go back much farther than 6,000 years, and that's stretching it. So we only know what we've been thinking for 10% of our whole time here. Yet, when we do look back with open eyes, leaving our assumptions and preconceived ideas behind, straining with every means at our disposal to peer as far back as we can, we find a huge surprise - in the earliest discernable traces of cultures all over the globe, their afterlife beliefs agreed on one very peculiar point. They believed that human beings possessed not one, but two souls. Souls which culture after culture after culture described in very similar ways. Souls which were capable of dividing apart at death, each going off into a different afterlife experience. These cultures, I found, almost always attached either the belief in reincarnation, or the belief in a dreamlike netherworld, or both beliefs, to this binary soul doctrine. Some cultures believed that one of their souls goes on to reincarnate after death, while the other one disappeared into the air, or fell asleep, or became dormant. Others held that one of their souls becomes trapped in a netherworld, while the other one was lost sight of. And a few cultures believed that one of their souls went on to reincarnate, while the other one became trapped in a dreamlike netherworld. Some cultures, such as the Australian aborigines, still do (Toynbee, 1976). The biggest surprise to me was discovering that the ancient Christians also used to believe in binary souls. They called them the spirit and the soul.

As an idea about what happens to us after death, this ancient idea of two dividing souls has pretty much been lost and forgotten for centuries. But while we as a culture may have intellectually lost sight of this as a picture of death, we have NOT lost sight of it as a picture of the makeup of a human being. The idea that people are three-part creatures, having one body which holds two soul-type elements, is not only an ancient doctrine, it is also very modern and familiar image, an ancient insight that still lives and breathes in the very words we speak. Today, we still commonly speak of ourselves as having body, soul, and spirit, or body, mind and soul, or body, heart and soul, or some other variation of this theme. We're not always even entirely sure what we mean by some of these terms anymore, but it is nonetheless still very much an ingrained habit in our cultural thought patterns to think of people as having three parts to their whole, three components in their makeup. Now, I was surprised when I realized that this binary soul doctrine was once so widespread all over the world, during a time when most historians believe that all these cultures were very separate and indigenous and individual. But I don't think that anything surprised me so much as realizing that the Biblical tradition also subscribed to this same idea in the earliest days of those religions. I'd always assumed that the Biblical terms "soul" and "spirit" referred to the same thing, but it turns out they don't. The two terms in the Bible consistently refer to two very different spiritual elements. There are even a few passages that mentions the two of them side of side, and one passage even warns that these two parts of a person can be forcibly divided apart from one another.

It eventually dawned on me that the Bible uses these terms in very much the same way the modern psychologists use the terms conscious and unconscious. And then it dawned on me that modern science also subscribes to a binary-soul philosophy! I found this to be absolutely astonishing! Our culture, after thousands of years, has found reason to again resuscitate and embrace this ancient concept. Thousands of years ago, cultures all over the world believed in two souls, but sometime after the fall of the Roman Empire, the whole binary soul idea was pretty much forgotten by our culture, and since then the personality, the SELF, began to be considered a single unit, whole and indivisible. After that, all references to "soul" or "spirit" were regarded as pointing to more or less the same thing.

But now, we find, modern man has applied the most rigorous tests possible, and again arrived at the conclusion that we are indeed two-parted creatures, comprised of a conscious mind and an unconscious mind. At the dawn of this century, Freud (Freud, 1965) and Jung (Jung,1933, 1969) introduced and developed and popularized the notion that the human psyche is composed of two distinct parts - the conscious and the unconscious. Subsequent psychological research over the course of the century defined the two parts in much the same way the ancients described the two souls - one was objective, logical, masculine, and had free will, while the other was subjective, emotional, feminine, and held the memory.

This binary-mind doctrine, of course, came under heavy criticism in the latter half of the century, mostly as an offshoot of the nearly-universal cultural rejection of Freud's sexual theories. But with the advent of neuropsychology, the basic premise of the two-parted mind has been powerfully reinforced and confirmed in the last 30 years. The study of the two hemispheres of the brain has decisively determined that two entirely separate and distinct minds do indeed co-exist in the brain, one residing in the right hemisphere, and one in the left (Schiffer, 1998; Ornstein, 1997; Springer and Deutsch, 1985). And again, just like Freud and Jung maintained at the turn of the century, and just like the Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, and Chinese also maintained thousands of years earlier, one of these minds is objective, logical, and detail-oriented, while the other is subjective, emotional, and context-oriented. One sees the forest, one sees the trees .

Incredibly, the ancient religious concept that we all possess both "head" and "heart", both soul and spirit, was not merely reintroduced and substantiated in this century by "soft science" - analytical psychology, but was actually then also decisively confirmed, by the "hard science" of neurology. It almost seems as if, after science struggled to climb, inch by inch, to the top of the mountain, in the end it only found religion sitting there already, having patiently waited thousands of years for science to catch up.

Amazed by this, I turned back to the binary soul doctrines I'd found in all those other cultures, and found, without exception, that they all described their two souls the same way modern science describes the conscious and the unconscious. In culture after culture after culture, one soul was described as objective, impersonal, rational, logical, intelligent, discriminating, order-conscious and detail-oriented, verbal, articulate, and language-oriented, strong, masculine, dominant, active, vibrant, dynamic, powerful, immortal and invulnerable. Often called the "spark of life", this soul could not leave the body during life. It was thought to possess the power of independent free will choice, but it did not possess the memory. Very often, after death this soul was described as reincarnating into a new body and starting all over again.

The other soul was described as subjective, personal, illogical and irrational, chaotic, creative, imaginative, artistic, emotional, intuitive, only semi-conscious or dreaming, incommunicative or at least nonverbal, image- or picture-oriented, weak, feminine, submissive, passive, responsive, accommodating, receptive, and vulnerable. Often described as the person's "double", it was thought capable of leaving the body during dreams and mystical experiences. It was consistently held to be the source of the person's emotions and sense of right and wrong, or conscience. It was thought to possess and store all the person's memories, but it did not possess the power of independent free will choice. After death, this soul was often described as becoming dim-witted and entering a permanent dreamlike netherworld experience.

This, then, was the ancient world's concept of the inner makeup of a human being. It was a belief that somehow existed on literally every continent on the planet about 5,000 years ago. And it is virtually the same picture, detail for detail, that modern science has

rediscovered in this century.

The next step was an obvious one. All these cultures had already known about the conscious and the unconscious, and they all somehow managed to agree that these two souls both survive death, but divided apart in the process. So the logical question is - what would happen to the conscious and the unconscious if they DID divide apart after death? Where would they be? What would each experience? Well, this frankly doesn't seem so hard to figure out. Each would, obviously, lose what the other half gave it, and would be forced to rely exclusively on its own capacities.

The conscious half, then, would lose all its memory, all its emotion, everything it used to receive from the unconscious. Right off this becomes interesting - such a loss would explain the NDE reports of people experiencing a loss of their emotions and their sense of connectedness immediately after leaving the body. It would also explain, I realized with a shock, the absence of emotion and memory that Past-Life Regression subjects report during the time spent in-between lives. And without the unconscious, the conscious mind would have no memory and therefore no sense of pattern or system or connections or context, leaving it just like a newborn baby, unable to see any patterns in anything around it. Without any sense of context, everything it observed around it would seem to be just random jumble of meaningless chaos, and this would seem to perfectly explain why so many Past-Life Regression subjects had reported the same peculiar story of floating in an empty black nothingness in- between lives. And without those memories and that sense of connectedness, yet still being verbal, it would also explain the bewildered "lost souls" that have both been occasionally reported during Near-Death Experiences, and also occasionally seen and spoken with as ghosts. And although the conscious would lose its entire memory if separated from the unconscious, it would nonetheless still possess its free will, remaining free to make new choices and decisions, and so, it would be capable of moving on into entirely new experiences, never knowing or even suspecting that the previous life had ever occurred. And this sounds an awful lot like reincarnation.

When I realized these simple cause-and-effect connections, I was stunned. If a conscious half of a human mind was separated from the unconscious half after death, that condition and circumstance would scientifically explain no less than 6 of the most mysterious and most commonly reported afterlife phenomena.

An afterdeath division would affect the unconscious very differently. It would lose all ability for objective, rational, independent thought, as well as all ability to make new choices. Without the conscious mind, the half of the psyche that holds the power of free will, the unconscious couldn't choose to do anything. It would find itself totally unable to move in any way. It would have to just sit perfectly still, with nothing to do but fall back deeper and deeper into itself, deeper and deeper into its own levels, deeper and deeper into its own emotions and memories. And again, right off this explains one mystery — Swedenborg consistently described the soul after death as "falling into itself" (Swedenborg, 1979).

And since the unconscious is automatically responsive and emotional in nature, it would be expected to react emotionally to those memories, feeding off its own emotional reactions to its own life memories. Being cut off from its own conscious mind, it would be completely non-reasoning, emotional, subjective, inward-looking, and running on full automatic. As it was looking inward, it would encounter its own stored - up memories, including its own long-forgotten feelings and self-judgments about those memories. Lacking any objective perspective into the external universe, this would be its entire experience. With no discriminating intellect, it could no longer ignore, deny, or reject those memories, feelings, and judgments. So, it would suddenly find itself totally, directly,

immediately face-to-face with them, remembering all those memories at once, and feeling all the feelings connected with them. And this dynamic would seem to explain the sudden and immediate life review that occurs in Near-Death Experiences.

Running on full automatic, it would review and re-experience those memories, feelings, and judgments, over and over. Such a division of the conscious from the unconscious, then, would also seem to explain the automatic sleepwalking behavior of haunting ghosts. The unconscious would just keep re-experiencing the same traumas from its past again and again, eternally reliving its past in an endless nightmare of living emotions and memories.

Now, while we are alive, our unconscious is constantly reacting and responding to all our different choices and decisions. It is constantly whispering to us, constantly comparing those choices and decisions with our own inner sense of right and wrong. That's its job (Wickes, 1963). But, while we're alive, we can consciously choose to block out those whisperings from our unconscious souls. We can, and often do, choose to ignore them, pushing these messages back down, out of our awareness (Branden, 1994). But if our unconscious found itself cut off from the conscious mind after death, that conscious mind would no longer be there to repress those judgements. We would not be able to hide from those judgments any longer. We would suddenly find ourselves face to face with ALL of them, a whole lifetimes' worth of repressed self-judgments, swimming in them forever. If those memories, feelings, and judgments were primarily positive, the unconscious, being automatically responsive and emotional, would automatically respond to them by generating positive feelings and emotions. Since the unconscious would be in a closed system, with no external input possible, and no decision-making ability available to make changes, this process would continue forever, compounding upon itself. The good feelings would grow ever stronger and more intense, and, in the unconscious' self- manufactured dreamworld, it would experience itself to be in heaven. But if those memories, feelings, and judgments were negative, the unconscious would then generate negative feelings, a process which would also continue and compound, becoming ever stronger and more intense. In the unconscious' self- manufactured dreamworld reality, it would feel itself to be in hell. And since it would be cut off from all external input, it would remain in this unconscious dream-state permanently, and 100% of its experience would , derive from its memories and its reactions to them. Caught in a circular pattern of automatic behavior, it could be expected to perpetually review its memories, react to them emotionally, and react to those reactions emotionally as well, all automatically, over and over, forever, squeezing every last drop of emotional content from its life memories. And this virtually duplicates the classic afterlife scenario of an eternal heaven and hell that is always becoming ever-more intensely felt and experienced. The pains of hell would grow ever more horrible, the bliss of heaven, ever-more delicious.

This, then, is what I discovered. The division of consciousness, all by itself, explains all the phenomena. No god is needed anywhere along the way for any of these experiences to occur. The whole shebang is built right into the hard-wiring of the human psyche. Science's own descriptions of the natural characteristics of the human mind would predict that, if those two halves were to divide apart at death, the human mind would in and of itself produce and experience all of the most commonly reported afterlife phenomena. These reported afterlife phenomena were predictable through nothing more mysterious than psychological dynamics. The discoveries of modern science, I discovered, actually anticipate the very same paranormal phenomena that mankind has actually been reporting for thousands of years. The ancient binary soul doctrine, as reinterpreted and clarified through the eyes of modern science, would seem to provide a solid scientific explanation

for the two classic afterlife scenarios of East and West. It would explain why the world has so firmly held onto these two completely opposite doctrines - because two completely different afterlife experiences were really being experienced. The soul, or the unconscious, was having one type of experience, and the spirit, or conscious, was having a totally different type of experience. This discovery suggests that human religion originally began as a science, a hard knowledge - the psychological mechanics of an eternal mind.

But that's not all. This division of consciousness would seem to shed light not only on the mechanics and phenomena of life after death, but also on even bigger questions of human existence, such as "Why are we here?" and "Where did we come from?", and "why is there pain and evil and death?", and "why do we divide apart after death", and "how did this all begin?" and "how do we keep from dividing apart?", and even "what is our ultimate destiny". Along the way, it also generates some very interesting answers to many religious questions, such as "what is the devil?" and "how did Jesus raise from the dead?", and "what is 'Judgment Day' and the 'Universal Resurrection'"?

One of the most startling connections I discovered was that this binary soul doctrine sheds light upon a seemingly endless volume of otherwise obscure and mysterious material from a huge variety of religious traditions. I go into a great deal of depth discussing these connections in my book, "The Division of Consciousness." Many of humanity's Creation Myths, such as the division of Eve from Adam, seem to speak of the origin of this division - when Soul and Spirit were first separated, or differentiated, from one another (Campbell, 1949; Grottanelli, 1987; Cooper, 1987; Coogan, 1987; Kramer, 1944; Jacobsen, 1976). Similarly, the West's Judgment Day prophecies all seem to reflect a climatic resolution of this division - promising a day when all the separated souls and spirits that have been divided apart by death down through the ages finally get to reunite and reintegrate back together once again.

If this division theory is correct, then human beings have been dividing apart like this since the dawn of time. Life after life, we have been automatically discarding our old unconscious souls. If the human race has been doing this for 100,000 years, by now we each have a number of old, discarded, long-forgotten, past-life souls that are submerged way down deep inside our own psyches, engaged in its very own eternal dream of heaven or hell. The world's religious scriptures suggest that Judgment Day will be when all these lost pieces of ourselves are finally returned to us. When we finally integrate all the various pieces of our eternal psyches back into a single healthy whole.

One might ask what the point of all this is? Why would we fracture apart into pieces at death? What would be the purpose? I have become convinced that the answer lies in nothing more unusual or mysterious than the normal processes of nature. All healthy growth develops through three stages, from unity, to differentiation, to integration. And I suspect that this natural process is the simple truth underlying all these afterlife mysteries — the human race's development of conscious self-awareness. The cells of an acorn, we know, grow and multiply, and as they do this, all the while they are differentiating themselves into many different types of cells, forming tissues and organs and systems, which eventually all integrate perfectly together to form a higher, more advanced, and more sophisticated life form. The simple acorn, in other words, uses differentiation and integration to grow into a mighty oak tree.

Human consciousness is, I suspect, involved in the same dynamic. Back at the dawn of time, both philosophers and many Creation myths suggest, the human psyche first divided itself, first differentiated itself, first organized itself, into two distinct spheres which are known variously as the soul and the spirit, or the conscious and the unconscious, or the yin and the yang. Such an event is remembered in our cultural creation

myths about a great division of the Primordial Being into two parts, such as the story of Eve being taken out of Adam's body (Gospel of Philip). And since then, we have been trying to get these two parts to join together, to integrate together into a smooth working system or interlocking parts. But the phenomena being reported, as well as the cultural traditions, suggests that in many people, perhaps in most people, the normal and desirable differentiation of conscious spirit and unconscious soul became pathological at some point in history. It went too far, progressing from mere differentiation into outright disassociation. The two parts became alienated from one another, and the normal interaction and discourse between them became impaired. In a word, the system became dysfunctional.

The modern philosopher Ken Wilber wrote: "In the natural growth process, if something goes wrong with either of those strands of growth, differentiation or integration, the result is pathology. If differentiation begins, but goes too far, the result is disassociation, or fragmentation. Differentiation gets out of control, and the various sub-systems cannot be easily integrated. They fly apart instead of fitting together. The parts don't differentiate they disassociate. And the result is fragmentation, repression, alienation"(Wilber, 1998). And, we've seen the evidence does seem to suggest that when we die our parts do indeed "fly apart", "disassociate". We "fragment", we break into pieces. This was, after all, the warning of many ancient religions across the globe, as well as the warning of the actual phenomena being reported today.

The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and cuts so deeply it divides the soul from the spirit.... ...I cut you in pieces with ... the words of my mouth. Consider this, or I will tear you to pieces.... [Those who] have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds ... shall be torn in pieces.... Ye shall be broken in pieces ... ye shall be broken in pieces ... ye shall be broken in pieces. - Hebrews 4:12, Hosea 6:5, Psalms 50:22, Jeremiah 5:5-6, Isaiah 8:9.

The earliest Christians would have agreed with Wilber. Most people have heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls,but an even greater archaeological discovery is far less well known. The Nag Hammadi scriptures, one of the most important archaeological discoveries of this century, holds compelling evidence that the earliest forms of Christian belief revolved around this very concept- the doctrine of a division of the SELF. The early Christians who wrote these scriptures believed that the ultimate goal, the secret to inheriting the "Kingdom of Heaven", was to integrate the two halves of the human psyche more closely together in life. The Christian scriptures found in Nag Hammadi Egypt in 1946 included a number of lost Gospels that hadn't been read for nearly 2,000 years. Today, the texts of these ancient documents are freely available for anyone to read, in bookstores, on the Internet, everywhere. And what they show is that the original message of Christianity was that, in order to achieve eternal life, one had to "make the two one." A person had to unite and integrate his soul and spirit tightly together during life. A passage from this find reads -

Jesus said to them, "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female ... then you will enter the Kingdom" - The Gospel of Thomas 22.

And if these two parts of a person were united perfectly enough, these recovered texts suggest, then the person would not divide apart at death. They would not lose their memory or become ghosts or become trapped in an unconscious dreamworld. Instead, they would achieve eternal life. The ancient Egyptians, Persians, Hindus, and many other cultures taught basically this same message - eternal life was possible, but was not guaranteed. To acquire it, one had to forge, within himself, the most perfect sort of unity

and integrity. He had to make the two one. How then do we avoid this division? The unconscious, we know, holds our moral sense (Jung, 1969). It is constantly reacting morally to our conscious choices and decisions, and whispers back these reactions to us. But if we ignore, deny, or reject those messages from our unconscious, this just widens the gap between our conscious and unconscious in life, further splitting apart our soul and spirit.

If we are to avoid splitting apart at death, if we are to avoid ending up imprisoned in some dreamlike netherworld, or eternally trapped in a ghostly rerun of our own memories, then we must integrate our psyches as much as we can while alive. We must recognize, listen to, and honor the messages coming from our souls in life, and integrate those messages as much as we can into our choices and behavior. When our actions on the outside are no longer in conflict with our feelings on the inside, then, and only then, will death no longer threaten to be more of a guillotine than a door.

The implications of the division of consciousness are, I believe, the Holy Grail of afterlife research. They provide cogent scientific explanations for virtually all of the afterlife phenomena being reported today. It is also the Holy Grail of religious studies, providing a scientific basis for a huge number of humanity's different religious traditions, about life after death and much more.

What does this discovery mean? It means that the vast majority of different reports about the afterlife, both past and present, were genuine glimpses into the conditions of life after death. That survival is real, but also that death is no guaranteed perfect answer to all of life's problems. That both the Eastern and Western views of the afterlife were accurate, but not complete pictures of the whole process. And that division after death is the norm, rather than the exception, but that it is not inevitable.

If what divides apart at death are one's conscious and unconscious, then to split these two parts of a person apart would truly be to split apart that person's very personality, their very SELF. This is what is at stake. But with this warning also comes great hope, and great promise. This discovery suggests that many of mankind's religions all originally began with the same vision - a recognition of the afterdeath division of the human psyche. But more importantly, they began with a noble mission — to teach people how to avoid that division.

This discovery shows how science and religion can be reconciled, by showing religion to have always had a basis in scientific realities with which we are already familiar. It also allows people all the world over to renew their faith in the original visions of the original founders of those religions, as well as recognize the underlying brotherhood of other beliefs that had previously seemed so alien to them. More importantly, this discovery provides mankind with a reason to reach sincerely towards integrity once again. Since one's own personal integrity can, with this discovery, once again be seen as impacting the nature and quality of one's afterlife experience, integrity can once again be sincerely treasured in our society.

With a single discovery — the division of consciousness — we have witnessed modern science solve some of the biggest and most ancient mysteries of all, explaining ghosts, NDEs, PLRs, and literally dozens of ancient religious doctrines. We have seen all the different reports and traditions and phenomena about life after death spontaneously line up into a single, simple pattern — the division of consciousness after death. Through this insight, we now find ourselves newly empowered to repair the divisions within this world, repairing the divisions between science and religion, between East and West, even the divisions between male and female, all by identifying and repairing the divisions within ourselves, from which all those other divisions arise.

With this discovery, we have been given a compelling scientific reason to believe in the ancient promise of life after death, but also a compelling reason to perceive life after death the way the ancients did - as a challenge, and not merely a consolation, as is so commonly the attitude today. While this discovery does empower us, it also brings with it a sense of utmost urgency - we realize that we need to repair the divisions within ourselves in this world, before they become all we can know of the next.

With this discovery, we have traveled from modern science to paranormal phenomena to Creation Myths to afterlife traditions to Judgment Day prophecies to the latest finds in modern archaeology, only to find ourselves arriving back at the most ancient advise of all - to thy own self be true, for our own integrity, it seems, is the key to surviving the two-edged sword of death.

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TRANSLATION FROM EARTH TO HIGHER REALMS AND BACK

Ravindra Kumar, Ph.D.

Abstract: *On death the physical and etheric bodies are left behind on earth by the soul, which translates to one of the subdivisions of the Astral plane that vibrates with the same frequency as the thoughts and desires of the individual at the time of death. Upon improvement the second death takes place and one translates from the Astral to the Mental plane, which is the heaven of orthodox religions. Reaching beyond the Mental plane stops further rebirths on earth. Others reincarnate at a proper time and place to learn further lessons.*

The Universe. According to the Vedas and Upanishads - Hindu philosophy and the knowledge gathered through the study of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead,* the Tibetan *Book of the Dead,* the Theosophical Society, Eckankar, hundreds of research projects carried out in the West over a period of about 150 years, the experiences of the saints and prophets available from time to time, and a variety of Near Death experiences, automatic writings, mediums, past-life regressions, out-of-body experiences, and cases of contact with spirits of dead friends or relatives collected by J.D. Goyal (1996), the Universe appears to be divided into the following seven grand divisions or planes. --

	Seven Planes	Usual designations	Nature	Quality
1.	Divine	Adi	Basic nature	Unmanifested
2.	Monadic	Anupama	Basic nature	Manifested
3.	Atmic	Nirvanic	Will (Sankalpa)	Spiritual
4.	Intuitional	Buddhic	Pure Love	Inner knowledge
5.	Mental (upper)	Maharlok	Causal- Karana	Thought: Analytical Mind
	(lower)	Swarglok	Heaven or Mental-Manasa	Bliss
6.	Astral	Bhuvarlok	Kama-Desire	Sentiments, Attachments/ v.v.
7.	Physical (Bhulok)	Sthool	Karma	Sensual knowledge

Each of the seven planes is further divided into seven sub-planes; thus we are dealing with 49 sub-planes altogether in the universe.

To read the experiences of individual souls on the astral plane, see the works of Swain, O'Brien, Haslop, Borgia, Sted, Yogananda, Sherwood, Rocher, Pike, and Myers among several others.

2. Death of the Physical Body. On the physical plane we possess a physical body and an etheric body which is similar to the physical body but not bound

by physical constraints. The physical body (sthool sharira) is made of the three most dense elements of the physical world, namely solid, liquid and gaseous. Accordingly, the body has bones, blood and gases corresponding to these three elements. The etheric body is made of four kinds of ethers (akashic elements) which are subtler than the three elements of the physical body. The job of the etheric double (pranamaya kosh or chhaya sharira) is to get the light-energy from the sun and pass it on to the nervous system for its nourishment. It is through this energy only that persons can move various parts of their bodies which are nourished and become stronger every day. At the time of death the Soul or Atman gives up two of its bodies, the physical and the etheric. The latter cannot be seen with physical eyes, but many clairvoyants or yogis with their divine eyes can see it. It consists of millions of pin-points of flashing light, and the seven centers of energy called chakras can also be seen any time by a clairvoyant, glowing in the central line. There cannot be a greater, more authentic proof than the etheric body of the reality of kundalini, which passes through these chakras on awakening. After death, the etheric body is seen to hover around the place of the physical body for about 12 days. This is why, perhaps, the Hindus celebrate in a spiritual way the 12th and 17th days after a person's death, so as to pacify this etheric body. It has been seen moving around the grave for several days. Although it does not have consciousness, yet some kind of attraction to the physical body seems to remain.

At the onset of death the weaker parts of the body start closing down first. Then the life-energy which was stored by the etheric body starts moving upwards from the feet toward the head. Other parts of the body stop functioning one by one, including the heart and the lungs. Poison mixed in the blood starts showing its effect, because the life-energy which kept a check on it exists no more. If the Soul/Atman does not want to leave the physical body at this stage, due to attachment, one suffers pain in a strange manner. I know one of my close relatives, who complained of being bitten by scorpions and snakes, suffered pain for almost an hour. He said he wanted to die but it was not happening. The death of a person at a higher age level is relatively simpler and more comfortable, because he or she is supposed to have conquered the five enemies (greed, lust, anger, attachment and ego) to a good degree. Yogis, who have already experienced death in meditation, leave their bodies so swiftly that one does not even know when it has happened. However, for an average person, the poison spreads and a state of coma sets in.

In the state of coma, which is the twilight zone of semi-consciousness, the person sees his/her whole life like a TV serial, in which the events are shown in a backward direction from age at that time back to youth, then childhood. It is at this stage that the Soul is one's own judge. One feels happiness and bliss corresponding to the good deeds, and grief and repentance over the so-called bad deeds. One is in a state of perfect alertness,whatever one's mental condition during one's lifetime would have been, and a decision is made about the future life to be lived. Since one is then in a state of purity, a clear and unbiased decision is made. Whatever is not necessary is dropped from the astral body and whatever is required according to the final thoughts and sentiments remains in the astral body. At

the same time, the entity finds its new home in the appropriate subdivision of the astral plane. Some angels or pure beings on the higher realm are also known to help the person in arriving at the choice for the next life, in accordance with the balance of karma. This law of nature or God is perfect and faultless. A yogi or a person with awakened kundalini, perhaps, crosses this stage as if with a by-pass since he/she has already seen in meditation the future life on one of the higher realms.

After watching the film of life, the astral body (sukshma sharira) slips out of the physical body. It is said that the gateway for the detachment of the astral body is through the crown center in the head for the person who has conquered the five enemies, greed, lust, anger, attachment and ego. For others there may be different outlets. The silver cord which links the astral body with the physical grows thinner and thinner. In dream states when the astral body is journeying into astral planes, its silver cord link with the physical body stretches as needed, but it is finally severed completely at the moment of death.

3. The Astral Plane. At the time of the separation of the astral body, the person normally falls asleep. This sleep may extend from a few days to a few months, depending on the physical condition of the person before death. When sleep is broken, the deceased finds him- or herself on that division of the astral plane which vibrates with the same frequency as the precipitated sentiments/desires of the life just finished. Unselfish people who are engaged in the service of humanity in some way would normally find themselves on one of the higher subdivisions, say from the third to the seventh, depending on their level of consciousness; the finer the thoughts, the higher the subdivision. From the lower subdivisions people gradually move to the higher as they graduate from their narrow and self-confining views.

For an initial period, people on the astral plane may not believe they are dead. Or they may want to visit their friends and relatives on earth. For either reason they may come to earth in their astral bodies and try to live a physical life, even try to talk to their loved ones. They call a name, but there is no response. Sometimes when this happens,you get a faint feeling that someone is calling you although you see nobody. After repeated failure to get responses, the astral inhabitant realizes he/she is dead and returns to the astral plane. Normally one is accompanied by a guide from the astral plane. A large numer of returning cases of this kind have been described in detail by Martin anmd Romanowski (1991) in *We Are Not Forgotten.*

People make houses and colonies on the astral planes, --just through the power of thought. They imagine a house in all its details, concentrate on it for a while and a house is there in front of them. They imagine a car, concentrate, and it is there. They decorate the house with curtains, furniture, carpets, cutlery; imagine the clothes of their choice, drink tea. Only after some time they realize the futility of all these things. They do not really need a house to live in, or a car to move about. They can think of a person somewhere on the same plane, and the person is with them This may seem like the heaven of many people's expectations, but there is no heaven as described by various religions, except in the fantasies of the religious pundits. For the astral body has its own constraints, as it suffers from the good and bad

effects of desires. It is the next higher plane above the astral where there is no cause of suffering any more. This happens after the second death, which will be discussed further on.

A person with an awakened kundalini who is living in the earthly world has regular visits to various subdivisions of the astral plane. It is the foreknowledge of the higher realms which an aspirant has as a reult of learning from nature or God. See, for example, the books by Yogananda, Muktananda, Aurobindo, Gopi Krishna, and several others mentioned in my book, *Journey Back to Our True Home :Through Spiritual Energy or Kundalini.* Telepathy, telekinesis, levitation, precognition, clairvoyance, and other ESP powers (of extra-sensory perception) are natural tools of life on the astral plane.

My father died in September 1992, and in September 1995, after exactly three years, I had a chance to talk to him through a medium in Charlotte, North Carolina. He said he was getting a long rest after a long time in some hospital. His leg which was broken some 20 years ago and gave him a lot of pain after a lot of operations, was being cured. He said he was going to get a new body after some time and would then be moved to a higher, light area. Then he could come to see me in a dream 30 days from that time if this would be acceptable to me. So exactly in 30 days we were walking on some plane in our astral bodies and talking about several things of common interest.

The usual concept of time having gone, astral plane time is measured only in the form of experiences. The period one spends on this plane may vary from five years to 500 or 5000, depending on necessary experiences either for the next worldly incarnation or for moving upwards tto the mental plane.

Although a detailed layout of the subdivisions of the astral plane in the order of increasing consciousness can never be made, I will offer a short descriptive summary. --

Grey world: a state suspended between the physical and astral planes, abode of the criminals and doers of heinous acts who are not ready to repent their lowliest activities.

First or Lowest subplane: Dark, dense, difficult for living, comparable to the condition of a man required to live in the center of a mountain. Abode of hardened criminals with heinous records. Dreadful creatures, cruelty, animal-men, depravity. Conditions described by all religions as orthodox hell (with the difference that this plane is created by the inhabitants' own mentality). Pret-lok of Hindus, where the "bad souls" are looking for entry into the bodies of others for the satisfaction of base desires. It's the astral world where animal consciousness shows itself in thought forms of hundreds of millions of people charged with prana or life energy created by subhuman minds out of anger, hatred, depression, etc. These thought forms are like clouds which also affect adversely people with similar thinking on earth. In time the clouds disintegrate.

Second Subplane: Less dark, less dense. More refined than the first. Abode of highly m,aterialistic people. Souls who awake here after sudden death have no idea that they are dead. They are persons caught in in-between states. Victims of the 1914-1918 war still looking for someone to kill. Great bands of loving Souls are also present to help poor creatures come out of psychic shock and other trauma. People are taken from here to the nursing

homes situated on the fifth subplane.

The reader should remember that each subplane has further seven or more subdivisions. Each of the first and second subplanes may thus have innumerable Souls on different subdivisions according to their states of consciousness and variations. Accordingly, the highest subdivision of the second subplane may have people who are much refined and ready to move to the next subplane which is the first lighted area from below.

Third Subplane: As the first "lighted area" of the astral plane, this is called the "summerland" by many writers. Those who have lived a good life, not necessarily religious but benevolent, not causing harm to anyone, awaken here and may think they have come to paradise. It may appear to be a copy of the earth without its negative attributes. It has mountains, lands, rivers, lakes, houses, streets and gardens similar to earth, giving a feeling of familiarity. Artistic, bringing dreams of perfection, glowing .buildings and even minerals having a participation in life. Some say that flowers also have a human form at times here. However, according to Ivor James, this subplane cannot be a replica of earth since the latter is degenerated. Nonetheless people here live in a similar atmosphere as on earth and with the same habits of eating, drinking, dressing, traveling, meeting friends and relatives, etc., everything materializing immediately through the power of thought. As the Soul grows it goes into a sudden coma before finding itself awake in the fourth or the fifth subplane, or even a higher one according to its consciousness.

Fourth Subplane: Fully lighted area with finer vibrations than the third subplane's, better physical surroundings and more beautiful things. This division has a special place for children and they are properly looked after here.

Fifth Subplane: Nicely lighted, higher vibrations, perhaps the most important division from an activities point of view. Far more beautiful, luminous, all the heavens created by the minds in all religions, streets of Jerusalem and other holy places, hunting grounds for red Indians, etc. Churches, schools, religious and philosophical bodies. Religious bodies congregate, believing they are the only ones saved, feeling happy and rewarded. Many spiritual guides of the people still on earth have their homes here. The teachers, however, are not really great and there is a language barrier; communication is through mediums. People appear in the prime of life here, bodies becoming younger and perfect. Books, libraries, centers of research engaging thousands of Souls on either astral or earthly subjects. Facilities available are unbelievable and the people are unaware of the passing of time. They think there is nothing better than what they have here: it's the end of the road. Learned people, poets, artists, scientists, great persons, saints -- all belong to this region. Hospitals for reviving Souls and providing them with new bodies are also here.

However, higher conditions still appeal to the intellectuals and they realize that this is only a station. From the realm of spiritual mind they get ideas and after a temporary coma they may move to the sixth or seventh subdivision.

Sixth Subplane: Very well lighted, similar to fifth plane, still higher vibrations, much more refined, more advanced, highly developed artistically or philosophically, fantastic landscapes, and so on.

Seventh Subplane: Heavenly worlds, still only astral since the real

heaven lies on the next plane -the mental plane, called devachan in Sanskrit. One may live for thousands of years on the higher subdivisions since the conditions are perfect and there is no counting of time. The Astral World does not have physical dimensions and it does not revolve around any physical sun as does the earth. Thus one has to learn through spiritual advancement that this is not the real heaven. The "second death" takes place and the astral body dies. One awakens on the lower mental plane, called heaven or swarglok.

The Mental Plane. For the inhabitants of the astral plane comes a time of restlessness, a desire from the realm of the spiritual mind to feel something new. The person awakens in a spiritual body in the spiritual world, or devachan in Sanskrit. The second death is the transition from the astral to the mental plane. While on earth the Soul lives in a physical body made of physical elements (earth, water, fire, air and ether); while on the astral plane in the astral body it is made of astral atoms having finer vibrations. In the mental plane the Soul has a mental body made with still finer vibrations. This person can see and feel more keenly, like a butterfly of beauty and light.

Of the mental plane's two divisions, the lower is the heaven (Swarglok) and the upper the causal plane (Maharlok). This plane is the actual heaven described by all religions where the person reaps the harvest of his/her good karma. It is the astral body whose responses to desire lead to attachment versus detachment or good versus bad. Since the astral has already been shed, the Soul is free of all dualities and no words can describe the happiness and bliss of its new life. On the lower division or heaven the Soul has a mental body, while on the upper the Soul has a causal body. The latter is the first manifested form around the Soul, that is, the beginning of a body with form for all time to come, as long as the Soul lives in the lower worlds below the causal plane. Above the causal plane the Soul journeys by itself, without form or body around it.

In the words of Sri Yukteshwar Giri: "I live in that part of the astral plane which is known as Hiranyalok. I help many developed Souls coming from earth, in getting freedom. People here are free from the problems of eating, drinking, etc. One can meet here with mother, father, son, daughter, wife or husband, not only from the previous life, but also from several lives before. One is free from untimely death, disease and old age. It is only intuition which works out everything here. One needs only the will to accomplish anything or everything." -- Sri Yukteshwar said the above words through his materialized temporary body some time after his physical death, using his yogic powers. According to the Hindu writer Goyal (1996), the Hiranyalok referred to is perhaps Swarglok (heaven), since the sage speaks about moving to the causal plane from there. He also speaks about staying in the Hiranyalok for a long time, which is possible only in Swarglok. Further, it is thought that one can meet with relatives of the previous life on the astral plane, but those from other lives can be met only in swarglok or heaven.

I had a chance to talk to Guru Kirpal, through a medium in North Carolina, for about an hour. He told me that he is living on the mental plane, and many saints and highly evolved souls live on that plane. Sri Yukteshwar Giri is also living on the mental plane, which suggests that most of the Self-Realized Souls live there and help people on lower planes in the process of their evolution. These High Souls can talk to other Souls and

even travel to lower planes for interactions with the less evolved.

All the planes traversed in the Soul's involution and evolution are interpenetrating like levels of consciousness. Interpenetration means the gradual addition to the divine origin or Source of the other elements: the monadic on the second plane or level, then the atmic, followed by the intuitional, mental, and astral, and finally on the seventh plane all the elements are present to form the physical body. In evolution the Soul transcends the lower elements of manifestation in reverse order to become the purely divine in the image of God Himself. One can visualize all the seven planes or levels in circular form around the physical plane, like the skins of an onion in circular layers, one above the other,each plane projecting its elements into the next lower, but with all levels interpenetrated by the divine, as the juice of the onion moistens every layer of skin below it.

5. Beyond the Mental Plane, and Rebirth: Beyond the mental plane is the reach of those persons who can be called really religious, who contemplate God without attributes or Nirguna Brahman, or those persons who are abstract thinkers on the level of receiving intuitive wisdom from beyond. They belong to the intuitional or buddhic plane. Above the intuitional plane are those who have either contemplated the Atman or Soul, or have through their metaphysical or yogic practices realized Jung's High Self, the Hindus' Atman, the Sufis' Ruha, Buddha's Light of the Void, or the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. They all belong to the Atmic Plane, the plane of nirvana or liberation, which provides freedom from the false and breaks the bonds of reincarnation or the cycle of death and rebirth once for all.

Selected people from all religions have reached this stage (e.g. see my book *Journey Back To Our True Home,* 1999). This region is composed of exceptionally beautiful mountains, landscapes, rivers, trees, fruits, flowers and lighted equally everywhere without any obvious source. You see yourself there as a dimensionless point of awareness, moving freely with the speed of thought if and when you wish, having no hunger, thirst, or physical desire. This is a state of perpetual bliss, incomparable with any kind of pleasure on earth, having an ability to see in all directions with an intuitive knowledge of everything. You believe you always have existed and always will. This is the state of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Experience-Knowledge-Bliss) which are the attributes of Brahman or God Absolute. Since the Soul (Atman) is akin to God (Paramatma), you have the intuitive understanding of God. Thus Self-Realization leads to God-Realization intuitively. Such a person has no requirement on earth, is not interested in knowing the past or speculating about the future, and of course unconcerned about the present, moving as a self-contented and liberated entity round the globe, always happy and cheerful.

Experiencing a higher plane while sitting on a lower plane does not mean that you travel bodily to that plane. In fact, the higher plane is experienced right there where you are sitting. It is consciousness that transforms awareness from the lower to the higher level, in accordance with the level of its vibration. The physical plane has elements from all the planes, but you will live the reality of only that plane corresponding to which your consciousness is vibrating. Thus a clairvoyant is living the reality of the astral plane although he is sitting on the physical plane. A saint can be

living the reality of the mental or atmic plane, according to the development of his/her consciousness, although sitting only on the physical plane.

Nevertheless, after the death of the physical body one may be transferred bodily to the region of the astral plane, or to the mental plane directly if one's physical and astral bodies have died simultaneously. One finds a permanent abode on that plane after death, to which the level of one's consciousness has been raised. For indeed, the vast universe has different layers with varying densities, representing various planes. As the Creator God intends all of them to be inhabited by the properly qualified beings, this is what comes to pass.

As a final note, anyone who has crossed the mental plane does not return to earth: his or her chain of reincarnations is broken. Others take rebirth at the proper time and place so as to learn further lessons and raise the levels of their consciousness.

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Physiological Correlates of Religious Belief and Psychical Research: Decomposition and You

Joanne D.S. McMahon

Abstract: Physiological and, more recently, neurological studies have received considerable attention and have greatly enhanced our understanding of psi. However, within the study of survival of bodily death, believers and skeptics alike have done little to examine the role of the body during and after death. To date, few survival researchers have emphasized the importance of physiology. The current essay provides an introduction to this much-needed branch of psychical research.

Introduction

The connection between physiology and parapsychology has a long and noble history (Beloff, 1974). Understanding the science of living organisms has led researchers to hypothesize about psychic perception. Research measuring blood volume (Dean, 1962, 1966; Haraldsson, 1980), heart rate, and brain activity (Alexander, Persinger, Roll, & Webster, 1998) has led to a better understanding of the mechanisms of psi. Near-death experience researchers have also embarked on physiological studies (Blackmore, 1993; Fenwick & Fenwick, 1995). Some of this work has been severely criticized by experiencers as not providing the total explanation. Other researchers have shown that the theories are limited in their scope (Lawrence, 1997). Though the theories may have limitations they contribute to our overall understanding of the phenomena.

The same careful scrutiny has not been applied to the area of survival research, which has focused primarily on the living. One such example is the research centering on percipients' physiological changes while experiencing induced apparitions (Radin & Rebman, 1996). It has long been my contention that in order to completely understand survival we must consider physiology along with religious/spiritual aspects and the results of psychical research. I believe it is of vital importance to maintain a comprehensive approach to the study. The current work is an elaboration of ideas put forth previously (McMahon, 1995).

Survival researchers rarely if ever take into account the physiology of the body of the deceased when presenting their theories. A prominent exception was Hereward Carrington. In his *Death: Its causes and phenomena* (1921) he clearly

explains the changes bodies undergo at death. Even within his critique of McDougall's experiments on weighing the soul, Carrington (1907) displays a remarkable knowledge of physiology and clearly explains the need to review all relevant data before drawing conclusions.

Another notable and more recent example is Slawinski (1987). His proposal centered on the notion that organisms emit low-intensity light and at the time of death the radiation is markedly stronger. He considered this "deathflash" as a possible explanation for the light reported in NDEs. He went on to suggest that necrotic radiation could provide a foundation for the formulation of theories of an afterlife based on the continuation of energy. Though his ideas were severely criticized (Sheldrake, 1987; Walker, 1987) it was at least an attempt at correlating physiology with survival research.

The fact remains that most current research has not incorporated the process of death or the changes the body undergoes postmortem. Before surveying these alterations, it is necessary examine both the results of psychical research and religious/spiritual beliefs.

Psychical Research

A variety of psychic experiences are reported at or near the moment of death. From the perspective of the deceased, there is an exceptional body of research on deathbed visions (Barrett, 1926; Harrison, 1879; Morse, 1994; Osis, 1961; Osis & Haraldsson, 1977). A rare but impressive subset of these occurrences is what is known as "Peak in Darien" experiences.[1] What distinguishes these cases is that the dying person reports seeing someone whose death he or she was completely unaware (Cobbe, 1882).

In terms of the bereaved, there is a vast array of anecdotal reports on PK-related events. One such case centered on James Hyslop (White, 1949). As he approached death he instructed his family to tell no one of his demise except for his secretary, Gertrude Tubby, who was to be told to go to her sitting as usual. As one of his daughters sat at his deathbed she noted that after Hyslop took his last breath the watch she was holding stopped moving for about two minutes and then resumed. Tubby was contacted and attended the sitting as instructed. The medium while in trance told Tubby that Hyslop was dead and that he had used his death for an experiment. The medium went on to report that Hyslop felt it had been a success. Months later a friend and colleague of Hyslop, Elwood Worcester also reported that "two heavy, substantial and trustworthy clocks" (White, 1949, p. 104) had malfunctioned. One stopped while the other continuously chimed. A repairman was called in to explain this but was baffled since he could find no ready explanation for the problem especially since they had been cleaned and oiled two weeks prior.

The study of apparitions has long been a fruitful endeavor within psychical research allowing for some of the best-documented cases. Myers noted that

1 The phrase "Peak in Darien is from the Keat's sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer."

"the recognized apparitions decrease rapidly in the few days after death, then more slowly; and after about a year's time they become so sporadic that we can no longer include them in a steadily descending line" (Gurney & Myers, 1888-1889, p. 429). Green and McCreery (1975) confirm this observation. The cases reported to them occurred "most frequently within a week of the death" (p. 188). Unlike many spectral appearances, crisis apparitions seem to display a purpose, a consciousness if you will, and often transmit a message of some kind. Such communication will occasionally include information previously unknown. As *crisis* apparitions, these appearances, by definition, center on a tragic or untimely death. Some have even indicated the manner in which they died such a pointing to wounds they may have incurred.

Apparitional sightings are consistent with findings in psychology, except that they are referred to as hallucinations. Hallucinations of the bereaved are often seen shortly after the death of a loved one. So common is the occurrence that "hallucinating" is now considered to be a "normal" part of grief. Lindemann (1944) was one of the firsts to report on such hallucinations when he outlined the symptomatology of grief. (See also Kalish & Reynolds, 1973; Rees, 1979) More recently Vargas, Loya, & Hodde-Vargas, 1989) reported that 64% of those surveyed reported not only visions, but hearing voices, feeling the touch and hearing the footsteps of the departed.

Religious and Spiritual Beliefs

In her survey of religious beliefs and social representations, Miller (1997) poses the question "What happens to use after we die?" When looking at after-death systems utilizing questionnaires, art, poetry, articles, and photographs, she noted a consistency among most cultures. The after-death state was not static; it was not a location but involved change and movement. The after-death state, she came to realize, was a journey. By comparing various cultural systems, a pattern of four stages emerged. The first stage is what she refers to as a "Waiting Place." It is here that most systems acknowledge the need for rest and adjustment. The deceased "is transformed from a physical to a spiritual being in order to make the trip" (p. 19). The dead are said to be in a state of relaxation; often taking on a new body or new characteristics. Three stages follow — a judgement phase, the realm of possibilities, and the return.

According to Miller, the rituals occurring at the time when one is in the waiting place "bring order in times of potential emotional chaos" (p. 70). It is also at this time that the dead and the living are still close and can communicate. Anecdotal reports are available of psychics and mediums "seeing" or in some fashion experiencing the deceased at their own funerals.

Though it is a time for transformation the transition is not always a smooth one. For some people it is said that there is a time period needed for adjustment. Hampton, a Theosophist (1943) outlines very specific guidelines for the change. Those with little or no spiritual training or understanding and those who die suddenly often need more time to settle in to their new existence. "Many of

those killed in accidents, many suicides, many soldiers killed suddenly, do not know immediately that they are dead" (Hampton, 1943, p.88).

Some systems are more specific than others as to the time spent in the waiting place. Within Tibetan Buddhism the guidelines are very specific (Evans-Wentz, 1960). For three and a half or sometimes four days after the moment of death the deceased is believed to be in a trance-like state which Miller would consider the waiting place. Many systems indicate the time period being approximately three days. Even Goodman (1997) in her visionary experience of death was expecting to "stay" for four days but was told she would be there for forty instead. Surveying funeral customs Habenstein and Lamers (1960) note that in many cultures the soul is said to remain near the body for a certain amount of time usually between three and seven days.

Death and After

As delineated in earlier writings (McMahon, 1995), death is not an instantaneous event. It has duration so an exact time is not discernible. Mere estimations are possible. The question then arises, what else is happening as the heart stops, blood flow ceases, and brain activity is nonexistent?

The first changes to occur are those of body temperature, color and rigidity; known as algor mortis, livor mortis, and rigor mortis, respectively. Most people consider dead bodies to be cold when in fact they are merely room temperature. This process occurs at a rate of approximately one degree per hour until room temperature is reached. Livor mortis or color of death is the process whereby the corpse's color is altered due to the fact that blood is no longer flowing through the body and begins to settle in the lower parts. It takes about two hours for the signs of this process to become visible. After eight hours the red cells begin to breakdown and the color becomes permanent.

Rigor mortis is a process familiar at least in name to most people. It is the origin of the slang term "stiff" when referring to a corpse. Immediately after death the muscles in the body completely relax. A constricting of the muscles however sets in between two and six hours after death. The rigidity begins in the face, specifically the eyelids, neck, and jaw. It then spreads over the trunk, limbs, and internal organs including the heart. This condition will remain for anywhere from 10 to 72 hours. After that the muscles will again relax following the same order in which they began. "As a general rule the sooner the rigidity appears, the sooner it will disappear" (Strub & Frederick, 1979, p. 105) and the stronger it will be.

Rigor mortis is an intriguing process because to date little is known about its true cause. Evans provides a lengthy chemical explanation for the process and concludes that the key to the problem of rigor mortis now appears to be the adenosine triphosphate cycle" (1963, p. 30). Iserson speculates that it is the result of either "coagulation of muscle proteins or a shift in the muscle's energy containers (ATP-ADP)" (1994, p. 42). Though it was long believed that chemical changes in acidity caused rigor further research has shown that "rigor

mortis may be the cause of the acid formulation rather than the result of it " (Frederick & Strub, 1979, p. 102).2 But no one is sure.

What is certain is that rigor is transitory and temporary. It will disappear naturally though it can be broken up by massage, bending, flexing, or rotating. It is a "chemical phenomenon" but "has no direct association with the processes or reactions of the living body" (Frederick & Strub, 1979, p. 103).

The factors influencing the onset and duration of rigor are fascinating but rarely discussed outside the fields of chemistry, pathology and mortuary science. People with well-developed muscle tone experience more intense rigor than children, the elderly, and the debilitated. Fear and anger can accelerate rigor.

A rare but relevant phenomenon related to rigor mortis is cadaveric spasm. In essence it appears as an immediate and spontaneous rigor brought on by great mental tensions before death. It is seen in some suicidal deaths where the deceased remains holding the weapon after the act. Under normal circumstance the gun or knife should fall since the typical reaction after death is muscle relaxation. People have been found following accidental falling still grasping branches of trees or shrubs. During war soldiers are sometimes seen still holding their rifles. Though cadaveric spasm is not truly a form of rigor mortis, since there is no initial period of flaccidity, it mimics rigor in many ways. The reason for rigor mortis and cadaveric spasm remains a mystery.

Once the rigor has passed it does not return. It is then that the more dramatic signs of putrefaction begin, normally between two and three days. Discoloration begins on the right lower portion of the abdomen before spreading to other parts of the body. Gases then begin to form. Eventually the greenish color turns to purple then to black. Discoloration is evident over the entire body after seven days. Soon after the skin will separate, hair and nails will loosen. Without intervention the body will continue to decompose until little else but a skeleton with skin remains. This process will take approximately one month.

Discussion

The parallels between the actions of the body and religious beliefs are apparent. The most striking being the significance of the three day period following the approximate time of death. There is no way of drawing cause and effect conclusions. Did people in a bygone era note the physiology and conclude that the soul was leaving the body at that time? Was the waiting period a way to help avoid premature burial or disposition by some other means? It is not the purpose of this essay to draw such conclusions. The point is to outline the similarities and demonstrate the need for expanding the current research.

Another impressive correspondence is the importance of accident, tragedy, and untimely death. Note that both Hampton, in his outline of those who have trouble adjusting, and Frederick and Strub, describing cadaveric spasm, single out the same individuals — those who died tragically, following accident or

2 Ph levels tend to be very high at the point of severest rigor.

suicide. Consistently these factors are involved in the more dramatic events. The fact that the parallels are mirrored by the data of psychical research only makes them more compelling.

It is clear that there are distinct correlations between religious/spiritual beliefs, psychical research, and physiology. Knowing this can allow us to draw certain inferences. Prior to death it is more important than ever to assist the dying in their passing. Fear and anxiety are factors that appear to hinder the transition.

The three to seven days following a death are significant for the bereaved and the deceased. During that time it is our responsibility to acknowledge the passing and act respectfully and cooperatively. As I illustrated in earlier writings (McMahon, 1995, 1998), we should take stock of our rituals and create appropriate ones for both the bereaved and the deceased.

Clearly this is not the final word on the correlation between religious/spiritual beliefs, psychical research, and physiology. My hope is that it is the beginning of much more work of this kind.

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THE AFTERLIFE IN THE HEBREW - GREEK SCRIPTURES

Harry L. Serio

Judaism and Christianity are syncretistic religions that in their formative stages were influenced by surrounding cultures, particularly those of Sumer, Egypt, Persia, and Greece. The development and evolution of Biblical concepts of the Afterlife present a blending of various thoughts and philosophies. Our understanding of the Hereafter is dependent upon the revelation of God to many persons in many cultures, ages, and religious expressions, and this revelation is a continuing and evolving process. As Pilgrim leader John Robinson said, "The Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word."

The *Holy Bible*, incorporating the sacred texts of the Jewish people and the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, speaks with many voices and from many sources. With regard to the afterlife, there is no monolithic concept, but the syncretizing of ideas and the fusion mythological fragments from several cultures in a long evolutionary process involving many redactions, interpretations, and occasionally the interjection of original thought based upon new experiences.

Forensic psychology cannot give us answers as to why Neanderthals covered their dead with red ochre, tied them into fetal positions, and placed them gently into pits facing the rising sun. One can only imagine that even at the dawn of civilization there might have been a respect for human life and the hope that there was something more beyond.

The Pyramid Texts, hieroglyphics found in the pyramid of Unas at Sakkara and dating around 2350 BCE, provide an understanding of the Egyptian view of the afterlife which was rooted in the cyclical nature of their physical world, the solar cycles and the rising of the Nile. The Pyramid Texts is a collection of spells designed to ease the transition of the soul into the next life and give us our first glimpse into the Egyptian understanding of the afterlife. The texts were included in later tombs until they were supplanted by the Coffin Texts which became the basis for the *Egyptian Book of the Dead.*

When the ram-headed god, Khnum created the human fetus upon a potter's wheel and then placed it within the mother's womb, he also created the *ka*, a spiritual shell which resembled the person and lived within the human heart. While the *ka* could separate from the body during times of deep sleep or coma in a form of astral projection (which occasionally could be seen by others), it was only at death that it became detached from the body. Because it was essential that the *ka* remain in close proximity to the body, the need for mummification became apparent. A *ka* statue was provided as a "spare body" in the event that the corpse was destroyed. Tombs became more elaborate with several rooms and even false doors to entice the *ka* to return following its nightly sojourn to be judged by Osiris. The Egyptian word for tomb was *het-ka*, or "house of the *ka*." Since the *ka* was a spiritual duplicate of the body, it was provided with food and water left at the false door.

As long as the *ka* remained a viable entity sustained by the gifts of the living and the mercy of Osiris, the deceased held onto the possibility of eternal life.

There was also a nonphysical aspect of the person called the *ba* which contained the psychological essence of the individual, his personality and character, emotional disposition, and to some degree his intelligence. The *ba*, represented by a human-headed bird, also disconnected from the body at death and began its journey in search of the *ka*. The reunion of the *ka* and *ba* in the afterlife enabled the individual to become an *akh*, the spiritual body that continues to live through eternity. The survival of the *akh* is insured by the continued prayers of the priests and the descendants of the deceased, and in the existence of the name of the one entombed. As long as the name existed in memory, prompted by the written cartouche in the tomb, survival in the afterlife was a certainty. The desecration of a tomb consigned its inhabitant to eternal death, thus the need for strict proscriptions in the form of strongly worded curses against potential grave robbers.

There are several important themes from this Egyptian view that will surface in the Jewish and Christian concepts of creation and the afterlife: creation of body and *ka* by a potter-god, a spiritual journey or quest in the afterlife, the judgment of the human heart in the scales of justice, the dependence upon memory for survival and the power of the human name, and the creation of a spiritual body.

One other characteristic of Egyptian funeral customs was the incision into the nostrils that allowed the corpse to breathe. Breath contained the essence of life and the dead were sometimes referred to as "those whose throats are closed." Without breath, there is no life. It was the god Re who held the *ankh* to the mouth of Pharaoh and gave him life. The combination of breath and name is a powerful expression of the life force, as evidenced in an inscription found in the tomb of Tutankhamun which reads: "To speak the name of the dead is to make them live again and restores the breath of life to him who has vanished."

The Egyptian influence on the religion of the Hebrews during their sojourn in the land of the Pharaohs has been underestimated. Egyptian polytheism which embraced the deities of the Canaanite and surrounding cultures stood in marked contrast to Hebrew monotheism. However, one cannot help but speculate that since the children of Abraham were living in Egypt during the Amarna period when Akhenaton was worshiping the Creator God, Aton, that Yahweh's revelation to Moses on Horeb might be a natural progression. The similarities between Aton and Yahweh are extensive.

The Egyptian view of the afterlife was certainly much more complex and highly convoluted compared to that of the Hebrews. Unlike the Egyptians, the Hebrews in the pre-exilic period had little concept of the afterlife. Death was the final state of existence, and that was all that it was—simply being, with no sense of animation or purpose.

In what many scholars believe to be the earliest of the Hebrew creation stories, (there are fragments of Babylonian creation stories in Ps. 74:14, Ps. 89:10 and Job 41:1), Genesis 2:4b ff, God scooped up the primal mud and fashioned it into the human form and "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being." Like the potter-God Khnum, Yahweh created life (see also Jeremiah 18:6) from the earth. The word used for "living being" or "soul" is the word *nephesh*. According to Edmond Jacob, the *nephesh* is the usual term for man's total nature whose defining characteristic is breath

(*ruach*). When the *ruach* leaves the body the *nephesh* is diminished, but when the *nephesh* leaves the body, the person is dead and the *nephesh* ceases to exist.

When Elijah took refuge with the widow of Zarephath, her son soon died because of hunger — "his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him." Elijah restored the son to life with the prayer: "let this child's life come into him again," and according to the Scripture, "The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah; the life (*nephesh*) of the child came into him again, and he revived." (I Kings 17:17-24). Some scholars believe that in the resurrections described in the Old Testament, such as the widow's son (and also II Kings 4:18-37 and II Kings 13:20-21), the persons were never really dead, but only appeared to be, (an early form of docetism), or were extremely ill and close to death, since once the *nephesh* leaves the body it cannot return. This is to miss the point that God has the power of life and death.

When Ezekiel saw the vision of the valley of dry bones (37:8), he saw that "skin covered the bones, but there was no breath (*ruach*) in them." When Ezekiel called for breath to come, then the bones had life. Thus breath (*ruach*, Greek πνεῦμα) animates the body (*basar*) to form the *nephesh*. Although some translations refer to the *nephesh* as "soul," we should not think of this in the Greek sense, for the Hebrews saw no life of the *nephesh* apart from the body.

There are two points of view regarding the Hebrew afterlife. One view is that there was none. When a person died, his breath returned to God and he ceased to exist. Sheol was the place where the person ceased to exist. However, Sheol, during its extended lifetime in Hebrew thought, underwent a number of renovations, evolving into the idea that the *nephesh* did continue in a less than animated existence in a dark and shadowy, silent world of diminished consciousness where the dead were not even aware that they were dead.

It is likely that the idea of Sheol was appropriated by the Hebrews from their Canaanitic neighbors who had a mystical relationship with the natural world and believed in several deities, chief of which was Baal, a dying-rising storm god. The etymology of Sheol seems to derive from the Hebrew word meaning "to ask or inquire," and in a cognitive form from the Akkadian *šá ilu*, "one who consults spirits" (Gaster, 788). This helps us to understand the encounter of King Saul with the medium of Endor (I Samuel 28), a Canaanitic earth-based shaman, who was asked to conjure the spirit of Samuel so that Saul might ask of the dead what he is to do. Necromancy was practiced by the Canaanites, but forbidden by the Hebrews since it was outside of the normal priestly channels of discerning the will of God. Samuel was brought up from Sheol, which in this context is the place from which oracles are derived. The medium was called an *'ôbh*, but she is also said to possess an *'ôbh* which is a familiar spirit who aids in the conjuring of entities. The *'ôbh* is a revenant, one who returns to earth.

This story is an anomaly which makes no sense according to the Hebrew concept; if the nephesh has no awareness of its own existence, how is it to know the outcome of the battle with the Philistines?

Sheol, in its untranslated form, is mentioned sixty-five times in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. It is a hollowed-out part of the earth sometimes referred to as "the Pit," "the grave," or as Abaddon or Perdition where one is eternally lost, and where one cannot remember or praise God (Psalm 6:5). It is the barren womb, the earth

ever thirsty for water, and the fire that never says, "Enough" (Proverbs 30:16). This is one of the earliest occurrences of fire being associated with the place of the dead. In later times, Jesus would use the Valley of Hinnom, or Gehenna as a metaphor for hell. Gehenna was a necropolis of Jerusalem; it was also the place where the refuse was burned so that there were continual fires in the Hinnom Valley. The "fires of hell" must also be understood metaphorically since reason dictates that those who no longer possess a physical body would not be affected by anything from the physical realm. Fire, therefore, must be seen either as representative of mental anguish, or as a means of burning away the sinful nature of the person as in a refiner's fire. But such refinements would come much later in Jewish thought during the Hellenistic period.

The Semitic cosmogony described a three-storied universe consisting of heaven, the dwelling place of God, a nether world of primal darkness and the abysmal waters, of which Sheol was a part, and middle earth where humans lived. This was a view shared by many cultures, from the Sumerians to the Greeks. The Mesopotamian world view was that humans are the vomit of the gods who were forced to live in a world where everything, including nature, was against them. To die was to escape from life and from the endless cycle of a meaningless existence. When Abraham left the Chaldees, he brought with him elements of this world-view with one major change: a deity who made a covenant with humans and offered the promise of a good life to those who kept the covenant. Since there was no afterlife, the justice of God had to be resolved in this life. Those who were faithful were blessed with a happy existence and those who sinned were afflicted during their earthly lives.

In 623 BCE, King Josiah of Judah instituted some reforms to insure that the nation would comply with the original terms of the covenant and reap the rewards of faithfulness. He rid the country of all the mediums and necromancers who consulted with the dead, prohibited the teraphim and idols, and ritual activities relating to the dead. However, Josiah did permit the placing of food near the tombs of the righteous dead, a ritual similar to the Egyptian custom of providing sustenance for the *ka,* and thereby maintaining its viability. ("Pour out your wine and offer your bread on the tombs of the righteous; but give nothing to sinners." Tobit 4:17). The purpose was to strengthen the nation's lines of communication with Yahweh and eliminate all competition. Unlike the capricious and absent gods of the Sumerians, the God of Israel could be counted on to bless the faithful. When they weren't blessed, Israel raised the question of what they did to deserve punishment at the hands of their invading neighbors. This issue of theodicy made them receptive to a new interpretation of the afterlife.

Zarathustra (Zoroaster) lived in Persia in the second millennium BCE. During the Babylonian captivity of the Jews which began in 586 BCE, the Persian Empire was rising upon the world stage. Under the leadership of Cyrus the Great, the Babylonians were conquered and the Jewish exiles were free to return to their land under Persian control. The biblical books of II Isaiah and Ezekiel were written during this time and referred to Cyrus as the Messiah, the anointed of God. Under the Persian influence, the Zoroastrian teaching of a bodily resurrection was assimilated into Jewish thinking. Zoroaster had introduced the idea of judgment in the afterlife for the deeds committed during one's earthly existence. It was not enough to be happy on earth since death would always be anticipated and thus tend to put a damper on one's enjoyment of this life. According to Zoroaster, the souls of the just would be re-united with their bodies on earth; the *nephesh* would return and reanimate the flesh in a general resurrection. In this restored state people would have eternal life.

We can thank Zoroaster for introducing hell and its demons to western civilization. While the righteous would live with the creator, Ahura Mazda, the corrupt would exist in torment with his counterpart, Ahriman. There are enough similarities between the Persian and Johannine apocalypses to indicate that Christianity owes much of its eschatology, not to Jesus of Nazareth, but to Zoroaster, e.g., the hierarchy of angels and demons, the resurrection of the body, the final judgment of the soul.

When the prophet Ezekiel, one of the Jewish captives in Babylon and possibly influenced by the rising Persian religion, had the vision of a valley of dry bones referred to earlier, he was not only giving us an indication of a physical resurrection brought about by the return of the *ruach* to the *basar*, he was giving us a picture of a Zoroastrian field of the dead where the dead bodies would remain unburied and permitted to decompose naturally, hastened by the effects of sun, rain, predatory animals and carrion birds. In Persian theology, Ahura Mazda, the creator, would gather up the bones and reanimate them in the same way that Ezekiel described God bringing the bones to life.

We must, of course, remember that Ezekiel's vision is a metaphor for the regathering of the people of Israel. When God says, "I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves" (Ezekiel 37:12), this refers to the restoration from the symbolic death of the Babylonian captivity to life once more in the land of promise. Nevertheless, Ezekiel's use of Zoroastrian imagery indicates the Persian influence on the Jewish concept of the afterlife, the primary difference being that for the Persians, resurrection was God's conclusion to history, and for the Jews it was God's transformation of history.

We should also note that the Pharisees, who gave Jesus such a hard time and were often held as the antithesis of Jesus' teachings, actually held a view of the afterlife that was consistent with later Christian thinking as expounded on by Paul of Tarsus. The Pharisees had their origin during the Persian period and were strongly influenced by the Iranian religion. The etymology of the name "Pharisee" may have derived from the Persian region of Fars, hence the modern term for the language of Iran, "Pharsee" or "Farsi." There is even some speculation that the Pharisees might even have come from the Zoroastrian priestly group known as the Magi. The Pharisees were definitely part of the new order of post-exilic Judaism, as opposed to the Sadducees, the priests after the order of Zadok, who held to the levitical tradition and the preservation of ancient Judaism. The Sadducees maintained a belief in Sheol; the Pharisees were resurrectionists.

Jesus' use of the Persian word "Paradise" to refer to the afterlife is also interesting. He said to the thief on the cross next to him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). The word means "garden" and was also used to refer to the "Garden of Eden." The life in the world to come for the righteous would be a restoration to paradise with its tree of life as opposed to the fires of hell for the ungodly. The word is used twice more in scripture: Revelation 2:7 — "To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God." And also by Paul when he speaks of his out-of-body experience in which he visits Paradise located in the third heaven: "I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat."

A difference between the Zoroastrian view of the resurrection and those of Jesus and Paul is one of timing. Zoroaster and John the Divine seem to prefer an indefinite

period of waiting, of being dead, before the restoration to life. Jesus told his cross-mate, "*Today*, you will be with me in Paradise." Paul thought of the dead as already being present with Christ in Paradise. The timing can be reconciled in that when one passes from the temporal into the eternal, time loses its meaning and relevance. There is no sequence of events, but all things occur at once.

The Zoroastrian influence radically transformed Jewish theology and subsequently affected Christian concepts of the afterlife. Indeed, there are some who would go so far as to propose that Christianity owes more to the teachings of Zoroaster than to Jesus of Nazareth and to his leading interpreter, Paul of Tarsus.

In the period between 550 and 300 BCE, the Greeks were the sworn enemies and arch-rivals of the Persian Empire. With the defeat of Darius on the plains of Gaugemela in 321, Alexander the Great ushered in the Hellenistic period. Now the religion of the Greeks would influence the conquered territory of the Jews.

The Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul. This is different from the Egyptian idea of the survival of the *ka* which could perish in its postmortem existence if not properly cared for, and from the Zoroastrian view of resurrection in which the flesh is reanimated, and certainly from the pre-exilic Jewish view of non-existence after death.

The mythology of the Greeks varied in its concept of the afterlife from descriptions in Homer to the great tragedians such as Aeschylus and Sophocles to Plato to the transitional writings of Philo of Alexandria who set the stage for later Christian writers to incorporate Greek notions into the theology of the early church.

The prevailing myth of the Greeks had the soul liberated from the body at the time of death and making its journey to the River Styx where the ferryman Charon would receive his obolus in payment for the transition to the next life in the realm of Hades. The living could not enter Hades without a passport, a golden bough, nor could those who were improperly buried, even if it were a handful of sand ceremonially placed over the corpse as Antigone did to her brother Polynices.

There were five rivers that separated the dead from the living, each river increasing the separation of the soul from the physical world. The Styx, whose name derived from the word for "hatred," Acheron, the river or lake of woe, Cocytus, the river of wailing or mourning, Phlegethon, the river of fire which purged the soul of earthly things, and finally Lethe, the river of oblivion from whose waters the dead drank to lose all memory of their former life. One might be tempted to compare the Greek five degrees of separation to the five stages of dying outlined by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross as one prepares for the final transition of one's earthly life.

Hades was divided into three areas: the Plain of Asphodel where most of the dead would spend eternity in a vague, shadowy existence similar to that of Sheol; Tartarus, equivalent to the medieval hell as a place of torment for the enemies of the gods; and the Elysian Fields, or the Isles of the Blessed, where those favored of the gods would live a full life dining on nectar and ambrosia and recounting the deeds of their former lives. Until its destruction by Alaric in the fourth century of the Christian era, the Eleusinian mystery cults promised to their initiates access to Elysium, a salvation by knowledge and ritual.

During the Hellenistic period there was some blending of Persian and Greek ideas into Jewish thinking. The book of Daniel, probably written during the Maccabean rebellion about 165 BCE, described death as a sleep from which one awoke to judgment: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). Daniel does not mention how long this sleep will last, whether it's just a catnap or a long slumber, nor does he mention what happens to those who do not wake up. One can only assume that they continue their dreamless sleep in a Sheol-Asphodel type of environment.

The intertestamental book, *Wisdom of Solomon,* written in the first century BCE, gives another spin on immortality: "But the souls of the just are in the hands of God and no torment shall touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to be dead; their departure was considered defeat, and their going from us a disaster. But they are at peace, for though in the sight of men they may be punished, they have a sure hope of immortality; and after a little chastisement they will receive great blessings, because God has tested them and found them to be worthy" (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-5).

Wisdom does not say that the just will have immortality, only a sure hope of it. The later concept of purgatory will also cite this scripture, along with Malachi 3:2-3 ("But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness."), as a period of refinement before one moves on. Purgatory was never part of the New Testament vocabulary, but its later conceptual development would prove a boon to the medieval church as it amassed considerable wealth based on a self-appointed ability to hasten one's sojourn in Purgatory before continuing the journey to Paradise.

This idea of a transitional stage on the other side of death before one moves onto another form of existence seems consistent with the transmigratory concepts of Egypt, the Persian period before judgment, the Greek notion of crossing rivers and gradual acclimation, and even modern near-death and postmortem accounts of some sort of reflection and self-evaluation during this life's final exam.

It was also during this Hellenistic period that the ancient Jewish tradition of the body as a psychosomatic unity encountered the radical dualism of Greek thought in which the human body was seen as the container of the immortal soul which would be liberated at death. Philo Judaeus,an Alexandrian Jew, was a man of his times, representing the Hellenistic *Weltanschauung* which blended several divergent philosophies. He believed in the immortality of the soul, but he also believed that the soul, once freed from its bodily entombment, returned to its natural spiritual habitat and lived in a world with which it was familiar.

It is said that in the time before birth when we possessed the sacred knowledge of the cosmos, the divine gnosis that enables us to be at one with all there is, our final preparation before entering this life is to have the angel of truth come to us and put her finger to our lips and whisper one word: "Forget." How wise of the Greeks to derive their word for "truth" (*ἀλήθεια*), from its root meaning of "not forgetting." Truth is remembering what the soul is destined to know, and which according to Philo and the later Gnostics is the ultimate purpose of the afterlife, so that the soul can rise to the empyrean and live eternally with God.

There are several schools of biblical research that maintain that the Gospel of John was written in the second century CE and was strongly influenced by the Gnostic philosophy. Certainly, by using Gnosticism as a hermeneutical principle, one can place that spin on Logos theology. One might also interpret Jesus' words in John 14 ("In my Father's house there are many dwelling places") as a reference to series of heavens through which one must rise in order to attain the godhead. When Thomas asked Jesus how the disciples could know the way, Jesus responded, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. . . . If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Knowledge of the Truth becomes the way to God.

In the synoptic gospels, Jesus has little to say about the afterlife. When he refers to the "Kingdom of God" or the "Kingdom of Heaven," he is usually talking about a relationship with God that can be a present reality as well as a future hope. In one of the few references to the afterlife, he responds to the Sadducees question about a woman who was married seven times (Mark 12:18-27). His answer was basically that marriages are not made in heaven. ("For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' He is God not of the dead, but of the living.) Does this mean that God is only relevant to the living who are here in this plain of existence, or more likely, that humans continue to live in the Hereafter, putting to rest the old Jewish notion of annihilation or oblivion to which the Sadducees subscribed?

The other references to the afterlife which Jesus makes are usually in connection with judgment, the basis of which is how we relate to other people. The Parable of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46), in which those who ignore the pain of their brothers and sisters in this life will "go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life," is an indication that there is a continuation of relationships, of growth, and of further upward mobility.

Paul of Tarsus, who is considered the founder of Christianity and the interpreter of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, does not spend much time in dealing with the afterlife, but there is much of the transcendent and the mystical in his writings.

The Corinthian church had adopted the unusual practice of baptizing the dead (I Corinthians 15:29), probably to assure that the person would receive salvation in the Afterlife. Paul feels that this is irrelevant since the corpse does not rise, but that the resurrection is that of a "spiritual body." Paul says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality."

Here we have it, Greek meets Jew, radical dualism confronts Hebrew apocalypticism. The soul is not just freed from the body but transformed into a new creation, much as a butterfly emerges from a chrysalis, or as Paul would say, the seed that is sown is not the same form as the grain that emerges from the earth.

The postmortem survival of various aspects of the person and their manifestation to the human inhabitants of the biblical world is also a matter for further discussion. As

a result of the convulsion of nature following the Crucifixion, according to Matthew (27:52-53), "the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many." That ghosts were known in the ancient world and appear in many writings is undisputed. Even Jesus noted their existence by demonstrating to his disciples in a post-resurrection appearance that he was not a ghost, but a resurrected body of flesh and blood (Luke 24:39). The Gospels want us to believe in a bodily resurrection, albeit a body unlike its pre-death form.

Paul does not describe the geography of the afterlife, but does give us a hint that we might be able to glimpse the spiritual realm through mystical visions, such as when he describes a possible exosomatic experience in II Corinthians 12:2 when he says he "was caught up into Paradise." In speaking of the "third heaven," he may be referring to the Hebrew cosmogony where the third heaven is the realm of God and the angels, or he may be using the Gnostic description of reality in which the first heaven is the evil material world, the second is the celestial world of the Demiurge, and the highest attainment, the Third Heaven where Sophia dwells with all spiritual beings who have achieved enlightenment. Here in the Pleroma, all things are reconciled and complete, where the Logos or Word of God is united with Sophia, the Wisdom of God.

We live in a world of time and space, and neither is available to discuss the Apocalypse of John. Let us say simply that the contextual criticism of Revelation is that John sought to validate the suffering of the martyrs, deal with the issue of theodicy, and bring the universe to a satisfactory conclusion. He and George Lucas have much in common in creating the prevailing myth for their times.

The early church which canonized the Hebrew-Greek Scriptures sought to present the last word about last things, but as the church discovered, eschatology would continue its evolution. In our postmodern world of cafeteria religion, the Devine Deli is always open for us to pick and choose the views that we find palatable and easy to swallow. It is only as we struggle with ideas and are receptive to revelation that we will approach the Truth and find our ultimate fulfillment in a loving God. As the Pilgrim leader John Robinson said in 1620: "The Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word."

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PANEL: DYING, DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

BOYCE BATEY: At our conference last year, Penelope Cardoza of Hawaii was on the panel. Recently, she wrote a letter to me and I asked her permission to share with you a part of her letter as follows: "My personal belief at this time is that all of the 'evidence' I have experienced can be explained by Universal Consciousness, the FACT that each of us is capable of accessing all knowledge and that Time is an illusion we experience in the linear mode our puny nervous systems require. Everything is happening NOW; some people are able to master the ability to extend themselves into the Cosmic Soup, others get occasional flashes of The Big Picture spontaneously. I feel that reincarnation is a romantic, ego-driven theory and that the True Story is a lot bigger than that. Same for Personal Survival. All the stories about the tunnel and the light have come, after all, from Live People. I rather think that as matter and energy are interchangeable, we go back into the Mind of the Creator, whatever that may be, to be used to fuel another dimension, that is here, now, vibrating at a different frequency, hopefully past the gross level for good and all....anyway, I think we all have pieces of the puzzle and our individual personalities choose the holograph with which we are most comfortable. For myself, I just hope it's FUN....and perhaps lots of clotted cream with no weight gain, that wouldn't be bad!"

Before we call on our first panelist, I'd like to invite Dr. Daniel Zelling to come forward, as he needs to leave early and has something important to say.

DR. DANIEL ZELLING: First of all I want to compliment the organizers for this particular conference. I enjoyed it thoroughly, and with maybe one or two exceptions I was in total agreement with all the speakers up here.

Well, you find what you look for. When this culture is being excavated some three thousand years from now they'll know what God looks like; they'll find a penny and "this is God"; then they'll find the Clorox bottle, because that's the plastic that will survive because of its content. So we are the Clorox generation.

The other thing that I would like to bring up at this particular meeting is that this is an Academy of Religion and not necessarily spirituality. Kosovo has occurred in this country to an extreme, large extent. We've talked about the Judeo-Christian tradition and we've tried to find what we've had common ground in. I studied Judaism; I was raised Swedenborgian, and I've heard him misquoted umpteen times in this conference. From birth, baptized Swedenborgian, until the age of twenty-seven, I was a Swedenborgian.

But we are in North America, and the native American has a religion. It may be varied in different tribes: Shawnee, Blackfoot and others; and I think it behooves us living in this country to look at the people we killed. We cleansed this country; ethnic cleansing, so that the Judeo-Christians could occupy this land.

The other thing in terms of religion that I would like to bring out is, look around you and find a black person in this room. We have desegregated this country, we have just celebrated the young lady who sat in the front of the bus and refused to go to the back of the bus, and Martin Luther King is now an official holiday; but the thing that separates us in this country is Sunday morning. You can go to any church and find white people with maybe one black, and you can find a black church with maybe one white; but there is a

tremendous amount of separation , and I am shocked that we don't have at least two or three black people in this room . So maybe we're not reaching where we need to reach; and I'm not quite sure, in psychic research, if we shouldn't be more generic in terms of religion and look for the spirituality. I think God is generic; and in my work as a hypnoanalyst I find that most of the treatment that eventually ends up being spiritual and in concept of--I don't do this anymore, but in the past I used to ask my patients, "What was your religion? Was it strict? What is your religion now? Do you believe in God?" and I used to say, "How much power does She have?" Well, it sounds funny, but I realize I shouldn't do that anymore; some people get very offended. The "Old Man in the Sky" concept has the guilt. God is Light and God is Love. I've sensed His presence in this room.....and I wish you all the success in the world.

BOYCE BATEY: This panel is on dying, death and the afterlife; and the first panelist is Ana Jo O'Brien, who was an executive secretary at General Motors, taught parapsychology for twenty years in various schools, now does line editing to help people get their books printed, and has a whole range of psychical gifts: clairvoyance, telepathy, clairsentience and clairaudience which she will describe. Let's welcome Ana Jo O'Brien.

ANA JO O'BRIEN: I attended the first meeting of the Academy twenty-four years ago, haven't been back until this weekend and realize now what I've missed. Most of us have had mystical experiences at some level of consciousness at some time in our lives in addition to countless UFO sightings and several investigations of haunted houses. I have experienced every paranormal phenomena except levitation and possession and am looking forward to levitation, but do not look forward to possession. My analysis of psychic experiences are in three categories: Inspiration, Demonstration and Information. The following are among the numerous occurrences which I have experienced. In the category of inspiration, the first one occurred at Christmas of 1953 when I was driving home to Flint, Michigan when a blizzard occurred. The roads were sheets of ice, the snow was so heavy it was difficult to see, traffic was bumper to bumper, and I was quite apprehensive about what might happen, because the defroster was not working on my car, and the windshield wipers were clogged up with snow, and there was no shoulder for me to park on to wait until this let up. I had my mother, husband, and three children in the car, and I was responsible. I was praying, "Please keep us safe; please help us." I didn't direct the prayer to God or Jesus or the Angels, I just prayed. Then I saw in the upper left-hand corner of my windshield a hologram with the face of Christ, and I was filled with this feeling of confidence and protection. I continued to drive and shortly the defroster began to work, windshield wipers loosened up, and we arrived safely home. That stayed with me as probably a turning point in my life; I was not in metaphysics at the time.

In 1971 Margaret Flavell came to the Flint SFFI chapter and presented a weekend seminar of meditation, readings, and counseling. She took us through two meditations in the Saturday session. In the first one she directed us to find a comfortable place in our minds for the meditation, and I found a beautiful woods, walked along the path, and suddenly, suspended in front of me was a stairway. I stepped onto it and floated up to a building which was overhead. I walked into the room, with marble and of a cream or beige color. On either side of the room were tables behind which individuals, were seated. I couldn't tell if they were men or women, as I couldn't see their features. I walked to the far end of a table which had three individuals behind it. I was on trial in front of a tribunal. I don't recall the words, but I wept, as I was being chastised for

something that I was either doing or not doing. Then I walked from the room and down the stairway just as Margaret was ending the meditation.

She then took us into another meditation in which we would go into our heart and find a comfortable chamber to rest in. I did so, and again I was up the stairway and back into the building. Again I walked the length of the hall and stood in front of a tribunal. And again I wept. At that point the person in charge said to me, "Go; you have your instructions." I was given a second chance, and that was really a turning point in my life. I considered that having been in metaphysics only two years, that this was a very privileged communication to have received.

Then in the demonstration area of these categories I allude to, when I was eleven years old I had my first out-of-body experience, as the result of a high temperature, when I found myself up on the ceiling, looking down on that critically sick child. I don't know that I recognized myself as being that child, but when my mother walked into the room and called my name, suddenly I was back in my body. I never thought much about that, because I was a child, and it was just something that happened.

In 1973, however, a really traumatic experience occurred. At Christmastime, on December 22, I went to ski for a week. I stayed in a boarding house, because my budget didn't allow me to stay at the lodge. I was the only guest in the building until Christmas afternoon when everyone else would arrive, so for two days I was alone in the building. On the night of December 23 I slept fitfully, because the closet door kept opening, it wouldn't stay closed, and I thought, "Oh, well, it's an old house." The next day I skied all day, and that night I went to sleep reasonably early and woke up hearing a loud thud in the next room, as if a very heavy book had fallen off a table. But it couldn't, because I knew I was alone up there. Then I thought it was snow falling off the roof and went back to sleep. A little while later I woke again to hear footsteps padding around my bed. As they came over to my side of the bed, hands tucked the covers under the mattress. Footsteps went back around to the other side of the bed, covers were lifted up, and someone climbed in bed with me. I want to tell you I have never been so frightened in my life! I was afraid to open my eyes for fear of what I would see. I was mentally calling to the landlady to tell her to wake up (it was twenty minutes before two a.m.); I wanted her to be aware that something had happened at that time. And I was calling to this small female figure to get out of the bed, that she didn't belong here; but she didn't move. I was saying to her, "Get out of here, this is my bed, you don't belong here," and when she didn't move, I kicked her with my ankle. Then she was gone and the covers deflated. I did not sleep the rest of the night. The next day, Christmas Day, I went to the slopes to ski again. On the second run down the hill I was going much too fast for my beginner's status, and I snowplowed to try to slow myself down. There was a ridge of snow at the side of the trail, and my skis went up the ridge, and it threw me forward. My ski boots stopped my fall, but I was injured and had to be driven to the hospital, where they put a cast on my foot. I felt that that little lady didn't like me kicking her out of bed, as my ankle was broken exactly where I had struck her. When I returned to my psychic development class the following week, I asked my two teachers to go back with me and investigate the house. They both refused, saying, "You aren't to go back there, either, because you aren't welcome there." At a later date, two or three years later, I did go back and stayed with a group of people and we had another psychic experience that wasn't very thrilling.

In 1982 I was going through a session with my youngest teenage son who was trying his best to be delinquent. He was supposed to be home at 11:00 p.m. from his employment, and it was 1:30 a.m. and he wasn't home. This had been happening a lot and he was not paying attention to me. I was desperate, and I was crying in bed one

night and our little black dog, Blossom, came in from the living room where she always slept and she walked up to the side of the bed and put her head in my hand. She was so loving that I stopped crying, and she climbed up onto the foot of the bed and slept the rest of the night. She died shortly thereafter, and probably six months after that she came back to visit; I heard her little footsteps clicking down the hall, she walked into the room, I looked at her and was happy to see her; and she climbed onto the foot of my bed again. I think each one of these experiences has a message; there's a reason for them, and I think they were demonstrations of love and protection.

Then, in 1985, I was living in South Carolina, when a friend brought me a copy of the book *Ramtha*, saying, "You've got to read this, it will blow your mind." Well, it did. That night when I went to bed I read the Introduction and one chapter. Now, ordinarily, if I read a book which I find very interesting, I'll read until my eyes fall right out of my head. But I closed the book after finishing the first chapter and put it aside, which in retrospect was unusual. I proceeded to go to sleep, or so I thought, but I apparently wasn't sleeping, because I looked at the far end of the room and there was a double row of individuals, beings, standing there watching me. And I thought, "Well, isn't that interesting?" It didn't bother me, and I just closed my eyes to try to sleep again; it didn't work, and I found myself standing with the beings in that lineup, watching my body on the bed with the astral body above it. There was a golden cord connecting the two bodies. As I went back into my body and closed my eyes to sleep, I saw a newsreel of my life in black and white from the day I was born up until that night. It ran at super speed and I recognized what was happening. I thought that this is what you see when you die, but I was totally alive. The upshot of this was that I bought a copy of the book for myself. As I read the book, I read of past-life experiences that I remembered. *Ramtha* had a great impact on me and I feel as though I may have had a deep connection with him in a past life.

The next category I want to talk about is Information. In 1969, my son, Dan, was in Vietnam as a hospital corpsman. At the time I had a dream, he was in a base hospital. I dreamed that I was on the banks of a river in a very tropical area. I could smell the swampy odor of the water. I could see the cat tails on the other side of the river. I thought that Dan was sitting under a tree on the bank of the river. As I watched, I could see an Oriental with a Fu Manchu type of moustache with a knife in his mouth climb out of the river and creep toward Dan. I awoke, screaming, "Dan, Dan, look out!" My six year old son came out of his bedroom, crawled into bed with me and said, "Don't cry, Momma, Dan is not going to die." And he didn't. When Dan came home after his tour of duty in Vietnam, he said, "Mom, if you ever have another precognitive dream about me, don't tell me." I asked, "Why - forewarned is forearmed." He said, "It happened almost exactly as you said except we were in foxholes when we were attacked and were not sitting out on the river bank." I told him that I didn't think this was a true precognitive dream because I didn't think that Orientals wore Fu Manchu moustaches, but he said that many of them did and all of them carried a knife.

The next informational type of paranormal experience I had was not a dream. I woke up one night, reliving in my left brain a conversation I'd had with my son and daughter the previous summer when I told them that if my sister left me her diamond ring as she said she would, that I'd give it to Carl, my brother, who looked after her house for her. Immediately, I heard in my right brain my sister's voice saying, "If I had wanted him to have that ring, I would have left it to him." I then went back to sleep, and the following morning was balancing my check book with a printing calculator which cycled and "666" came up on the screen. That didn't mean anything to me at the time; I thought it was odd that the calculator acted that way. The phone rang and my son in Michigan told me

that my sister had died the previous night; she had come to me at the time of her death and she did bequeath to me her beautiful diamond ring. I realized then that she was telling me to keep the ring, so I kept it.

In 1988, my husband who had died, came to me in the sleep state, which ordinarily lasts about eight hours, and in a meeting with him in spirit which covered 72 hours, we talked about everything that we should have talked about when we were married but didn't. When he left, he said, "Next time, if we make the effort, we can make this work." I began to feel affection for him again.

In July of 1998, my father, who had died in 1947, appeared to me in my bedroom. I woke up to see him standing by the door and knew he had something important to tell me. Mentally, I asked him if someone close to me was going to make the transition. He said, "Yes." I asked if I'd be required to be present at that funeral when this happened. He said, "Yes." Then I mentally asked who and named my three siblings - Carl, Joanne and Ruth and mentally circled the name of Ruth. I then asked mentally, "Will this happen before the end of the year?" and he answered, "No." I then went back to sleep and in the morning wrote this down so that I'd have a record of it. In August, I went up to Michigan where I usually stayed with one of my brothers, but this time I stayed with my sister Ruth. We had the most wonderful visit that we've ever had. It was total rapport the entire time I was there. I flew out West on Christmas Day to see my kids and returned home on the "red eye" on New Year's Night. Ordinarily, my visit out there would be a minimum of two and sometimes four weeks. This time I stayed one week, thinking, "I've got to get back, I've got to get back." I came home on New Year's Day and the next day I got a telephone call from my brother Carl who told me that Ruth had died the day before. That really shook me and I packed my luggage and drove to Michigan.

BOYCE BATEY: The second panelist is Ruth Mattson Taylor, who as the daughter of the Lutheran theologian, A.D. Mattson, has been nurtured in the Christian faith, having learned to respect and learn from all cultures and religions. She is a spectrochemist and earned her Master of Science degree at Northwestern University. She lives in Maine and for the past thirty years has conducted research with the English medium, Margaret Flavell, in bringing through communications, not only from her father, but also from other persons whom she will describe. She has written several books, one of which, *Evidence from Beyond*, is based on research she has done, and she will be describing that. Let's welcome Ruth Mattson Taylor who will speak on "Inter-Life Communication Provides Evidence of Life after Death".

RUTH MATTSON TAYLOR: For over thirty years I have had personal experience of inter-life communication through working with the medium, Margaret Flavell, of England. Boyce Batey asked me if I would present some of the evidential material we have received, which confirms my belief that life indeed does continue after death.

Margaret Flavell and I met through a prayer and meditation group I regularly attended on Thursday mornings in Rye, New York. Margaret lived in England and during a visit to the United States, had come to Rye to visit Jane Evans, one of the members of our meditation group. Jane had told us about her friend Margaret, and of her distinguished career in the field of parapsychology. A born clairvoyant, Margaret was highly trained over many years in the control of her natural psychic gifts through daily controlled experiments and disciplines. A graduate of the London School of Parapsychology and Sanctuary of Healing, she was later assistant to Dr. Mona Rolfe, director of the school. Margaret is a positive medium who receives information while in full control and not in trance. A Methodist by background, she is a deeply religious

person. Reverend Canon Berton S. Levering, Rector Emeritus of All Saints Episcopal Church in Detroit, who knew her well, said of her: "Margaret Flavell is a brilliant translator of thought communication from the world of the departed... One feels her integrity of mind and deep sense of responsibility as she makes known the continuity of life."

I knew, of course, that Margaret was a clairvoyant when she visited our meditation group. My mother had died six years before, in November 1960; and on many occasions I had felt that she was very close to me, wanting to contact me. I had an opportunity to talk to Margaret about this when we were left alone in the living room, after the meditation period had ended and the others were in the kitchen preparing a snack. I thought that Margaret would suggest that we have a seance to see if we could contact my mother.

It was ten o'clock in the morning on a bright, sunny day, when suddenly, in that lovely, cheerful living room, Margaret said to me, "Your mother is here now, and there are three other persons with her." The others proved to be my deceased uncle, the Reverend Karl Mattson, who had been president of Augustana Theological Seminary; my husband's uncle, Dr. Wilbur Bowen, who had been my own physician and had died as a result of an automobile accident; and my maternal grandmother, Johanna Anderson.

The evidential material was overwhelming and indisputable. I could have fallen right off my chair. Margaret had never met me or any other member of my family before. It was a meaningful and uplifting experience, one that I've never forgotten.

Some of the evidence from my mother, surprisingly, dealt with china dishes. (And I had always thought that contact with the Beyond would be of a very profound nature!) Through that sitting I learned that our personalities do not change much when we die. My mother had always treasured her collection of fine china, which was still at my father's home in Rock Island, Illinois. She expressed great concern that the dishes might be broken, and she told Margaret that I should have certain specific pieces shipped to my home in New York. Also, she told us of a beautiful cut-glass vase (of which I knew nothing) in a cupboard in the house in Rock Island. She wanted this vase to be made into a lamp for my brother and his wife. My father and I located the vase in the cupboard, exactly where Mother said it would be, and we had it made into a beautiful lamp for my brother Al and his wife, Jean. During succeeding years, when Margaret visited New York, I received other significant communications from my mother.

My father, the Reverend Dr. A.D. Mattson, a Lutheran theologian, was Chairman of the Department of Christian Ethics and Sociology at Augustana Theological Seminary in Rock Island, Illinois, for 36 years. Affectionately known as "A.D" by students and friends, he had devoted his life on earth to working with and for the downtrodden. He was always at the forefront in the struggle for civil rights, workers' rights, and social justice. He was dedicated to a "prophetic" type of religion, but he was also a deeply spiritual person. He was known throughout the church as a social activist, but that activism was grounded in a deep spirituality and faith.

That deep spirituality and faith had also led him to have a keen interest in the paranormal phenomena of life. He was aware that many scriptural texts in our Bible took on a whole new, dynamic and living meaning when interpreted from a paranormal view. His interest in the paranormal also grew from various telekinetic happenings which our family experienced after deaths of various family members over the years. Later, while a post-graduate student at Yale Divinity School, he was exposed to scientific studies the professors there were conducting in paranormal areas. He had often said to us that if it was at all possible, he would communicate with us from the Beyond when he died.

A.D. died on October 19, 1970. Margaret came to New York for a visit in 1971, and on the morning of March 2nd, we decided to see if we could get in touch with A.D. and to tape-record our attempt. We had expected to make contact with him and to get evidence that he does survive, but little did we expect the quantity and quality of very significant communication and information that we received. From March, 1971 through October, 1973 we received fifty-five communications amounting to over five hundred legal-sized pages of typed transcripts. Material of interest to the general reader was extracted from that material and published in the book ***Witness from Beyond***, published by Hawthorn Books in 1975. Material received since 1973 will be presented in a new book, ***Evidence from Beyond***, to be published in the fall, 1999 by Brett Books, Inc., Brooklyn, New York.

A sensing of truth in mystical areas often comes by direct insight---as indeed does faith in God. From what we have experienced I am firmly convinced that A.D. survives and that, with the training and help of others in the realm beyond, he has been given the privilege and opportunity to communicate to us a vision of the Beyond to give our lives here more meaning. A.D.'s colleagues and students who have heard the tapes also have been quick to pick up the nuances of his personality and other evidential material, further reinforcing my own strong conviction. When we first communicated with him, the evidential material was quite specific. We only have time to give you a few examples.

In the very first sitting, he spoke to us about the disciplines of life, and said: "So many people have the feeling that they must work according to the way *they* feel. They say 'Lord, use us,' but they don't want to be garbage men or they don't want to be a lot of things which God might want them to be." And humorously he continued, "They might have to cook, even. That, too, is a discipline. When I could accept it as a discipline, and get my juicer going, then I could enjoy even that. This is something that has to be taught to people--- that the disciplines of life are those that are imposed by the surroundings and the obligations to society. God doesn't impose the disciplines. He gives us perfect freedom in spirit. It is we who have to put our disciplines on ourselves."

This section contains several very evidential points. When on earth A.D. constantly stressed the sacredness of human personality and the importance of each person to the total scheme of things. This applied to the various vocations people have, as well. He often would illustrate this to us by pointing out that all honest, contributing labor was essential to the total scheme of things and of equal worth in the sight of God --- from the *garbage man* to the *academician*. *Therefore, his specific mention that "they don't want to be garbage men" was very significant to me.* The comment about his cooking and his juicer also is very significant, as one of A.D.'s burdens in life, after my mother died, was cooking. He finally got a juicer, which he enjoyed using, and made a very thorough study of nutrition and diet. He would often demonstrate the juicer to people who visited his cabin. (Margaret knew nothing about the juicer or his dislike of cooking.)

In the first sitting A.D. also mentioned contacts with certain relatives who were dead but did not mention his father. In the second sitting I asked of he had seen his father. A.D. said, "Strangely enough, yes, because I hadn't appreciated I would need the help that my father could give me when I passed over. I hadn't appreciated how important it would be to me. I had rather thought that I would need the help of my mother, of my wife, and maybe of my brother. But somehow or other my father's impression on earth had formed me in a certain way and I didn't feel that this certain way would need to be picked up anymore. But Father has been extremely helpful to me in adjusting to the conditions of this new life....He is a dear soul and has made a great deal of progress and really is way beyond me at the moment." **When they were both on earth, the views of**

A.D. and his father differed greatly and were sometimes a source of contention. A.D's father was a Lutheran minister with a rather pietistic approach to religion and life, and he had been a stern disciplinarian in enforcing his pietistic beliefs. But A.D. was nonpietistic, very undogmatic, and open in his outlook on life. Therefore, A.D.'s statement that he hadn't appreciated he would need the help of his father when he passed over, is very evidential.

In the third session Margaret was given a "picture" of A.D.'s reception by his family and friends when he passed over. After a description of some of the people who met him, Margaret said to me, "They seem to be wearing ordinary clothes--- shirts, short-sleeved shirts, white knit shirts, trousers. They don't seem to be dressed in *robes.* Your father, as well, is dressed in gray trousers and he has a checked shirt on." A.D. had a checked, flannel shirt that he always enjoyed wearing, so I immediately asked, "His favorite checked flannel shirt?" Margaret said it was. Margaret then took time out to tell me that her sister, after she was dead, always appeared to clairvoyants in a favorite checked suit that she had enjoyed wearing when she was on earth.

A.D. then said to us, "That is perfectly right. You see, you have to think yourself into clothes over here. Your sister found it easier always to appear in her checked suit, which everyone recognized. So it was with me. When I was on earth, I didn't even think about clothes. I'd get up in the morning and I'd put on the first thing that was handy. Well, I stepped out of the physical body at the hospital and picked up the first clothes that were handy."

I didn't know what A.D. had worn to the hospital when he became ill. My brother Al had taken A.D. to the hospital, and Al later told me that A.D. had worn gray trousers and the favorite checked flannel shirt to the hospital. Al and I both felt that this indeed was certainly good evidence.

On February 28, 1972, we had a very objective evidential incident occur. Before a sitting on that day Margaret said to me, "Who is Constant Johnson? Your father tells me that he has not been well and that he will soon be over with them." **The Reverend Dr. Constant Johnson was a classmate of A.D. from seminary days and a well-known clergyman in the Augustana Lutheran Church. I had known him when I was a small girl but certainly had not thought about him in many years, nor had I had any contact with him or his family. I certainly knew nothing about his health, or even if he were alive or dead. I decided to watch the obituary notices in *The Lutheran,* and in the April 19, 1972 issue of this magazine, I found a notice of Dr. Constant Johnson's death, which occurred on March 14, 1972, just two weeks after A.D. had told us he would die.**

The early communications from A.D. were given mainly from the Astral Plane, the first plane of existence beyond the physical plane where we are. There he was more closely tied to the things of the earth, and recent memory enabled him to provide very specific evidential material. In later years of communication, he has been communicating more from the mental plane and the spiritual plane beyond that. There, he tells us, they do not show themselves so much in a bodily form, but function more as mind, and are known by their thought form. From these higher planes, he is not attempting to give much specific evidential material from his life on earth. Rather, we recognize him by his thought form, when he communicates with us. He tells us that each person's thought form is as unique as a fingerprint. The matrix or energy field of the mind or soul remains consistent for each individual, regardless of what plane they are functioning in. Therefore, even though he is now experiencing a life that is perhaps beyond our understanding, his thought form will still be evident in the material he gives us. This we

have found to be true. The following statements we've received from him, reported in ***Evidence from Beyond***, are but a brief example of this.

Concerning worship, he says, "True worship is more than religious ritual--it is how you life your life. When Saint Paul said, 'Pray without ceasing,' he meant, 'Live your life in communion with the God of Love." **When he was on earth A.D. could appreciate a liturgical worship service but he often expressed that this was not where the Church should place its emphasis---rather the Church should concentrate on teaching people how to live their lives according to God's precepts found in the Scriptures.**

On another occasion, A.D. told us of his distress over the war in Bosnia and other conflicts throughout the world, concluding his remarks with this statement: "The Earth is a planet for learning. Yet for centuries mankind has turned it into a planet of wars. Why is it that humanity has never learned the futility of war in achieving God's purposes for us on Earth? Pray that individuals and nations may gain new insight and come to know that war is not the answer." **This statement is very consistent with the torment he felt over the horrors of war when he was on earth, pain which was almost more than he could bear. When the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan in August 1945, he was so distraught that he told us that were it not for his faith in God, he would have drowned himself in the ocean. It was his knowledge that God was still in charge, he said, that gave him the strength to maintain a sense of wholeness and balance, in spite of his devastating sorrow over the atrocities of the war and the bombing.**

Concerning our purpose in life A.D. said, "We must always try to be God-centered, for that is the expression of our true selves. This 'centering' continues as the most important process of existence, even after we have passed from your life to ours." **Being God-centered was the important emphasis A.D. conveyed throughout his life on earth. Reverend Allen C. Nelson, who preached his funeral sermon said of him, "Of A.D. it surely can be said, 'He didn't preach the gospel---he <u>was</u> the Gospel!"**

Last year, I registered to attend the Academy conference, but at the same time, a landmark college reunion was scheduled for me in Illinois, so I cancelled the registration at the Academy conference. Are any of you familiar with the Hindu mystic, Saddhu Sundar Singh? A.D. had been intrigued by this Hindu mystic when he was on earth. The Saddhu was a Brahmin Hindu who had been persecuting Christians in India. He was a deeply religious man from a very conservative Hindu background. Yet he agonized and searched for a knowledge of God. One night he got up, took a cold bath and said, "God, if you don't come through and let me know that you are real, I'm going out, put my head on the railroad tracks and commit suicide." After a desperate prayer, he looked up and saw a picture of Jesus full of light. He asked, "Why are you here? I've been persecuting you." It was like Paul's experience on the road to Damascus. Jesus said, "Follow me, follow me." Saddhu had a complete conversion, and his family ostracized him. He went to Oxford University where he studied at the theological seminary for a year, but found it too academic, too much in the head and not in the heart. He returned to India where he took robes like Gandhi wore and preached Christianity all over India.

He became a very close friend of Nathan Soderblom, the Archbishop of Sweden. Soderblom wrote a book in Swedish about Saddhu Sundar Singh. My father had a copy of the book and after he retired, tried to get a publishing house to agree to publish the book if he translated the book into English. No one was interested in this Hindu mystic. After my Dad died, I asked various scholars who spoke Swedish to translate the book, but none of them were interested in doing it. I was pushed from beyond to go to this

college reunion instead of to the Academy conference. At a college mixer, a woman came up to me, looked at my name tag, and said that her husband, Howard Allen, was supposed to see me. I had not seen him since we were in college together. He had gone on to seminary and studied under my Dad. She brought her husband over to me and he took me into a corner of the room and said, "I've been having all kinds of psychic experiences and I've been told to talk with you about it." I suggested that we sit down and talk the next day. When we got together, Howard told me that in addition to being a minister in Long Beach, California, he had been teaching Swedish at the University of California. Howard and his wife had not been planning to attend the college reunion and had been pushed to come and made arrangements at the last moment. I told him about the Saddhu Sundar Singh book. They knew Nathan Soderblom's family in Sweden and had visited there numerous times and were interested in anything the Archbishop had done. Howard agreed to translate the book. The officers of the Augustana Heritage Foundation, which is just being formed, have said they would look into publishing this book. There is a seamlessness between the realms, in the communion of saints, and we work together and we've got to be aware, to be open to them. This is proof that A.D. is still working, and that he'll get this book published one way or the other.

O R D E R F O R M

Cassettes were recorded at the 24th Conference of The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research on DYING, DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE: PSYCHICAL AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS, at the Ramada Inn Philadelphia International Airport, Essington, PA, June 4-6, 1999. A $6.50 cost per cassette includes handling/mailing costs. Make checks payable to SFFI; send with this Order Form to: SFFI, P.O. Box 7868, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

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2210A	THE DIVISION OF CONSCIOUSNESS - Peter Novak	_____	_____
2210	TRANSLATION FROM EARTH TO HIGHER REALMS AND BACK - Ravindra Kumar, Ph.D.	_____	_____
2211	PHYSIOLOGICAL CORRELATES OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH: DECOMPOSITION AND YOU - Joanne D.S. McMahon, Ph.D.	_____	_____
2212	THE AFTERLIFE IN THE HEBREW-GREEK SCRIPTURES - Harry L. Serio, D.Min.	_____	_____
2213	Panel: DYING, DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE with Peter Novak, Ana Jo O'Brien and Ruth Mattson Taylor, M.S.	_____	_____
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